

THE "FORTY DAYS" OF SCRIPTURE



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THE
"Forty Days" of Scripture

SIXTEEN ADDRESSES

BY

W. T. P. WOLSTON, M.D.

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PREFACE.

THE addresses which form the first half of this volume (save Chapter VIII.) were given to mixed audiences of unbelievers and believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the latter half to believers only. This will account to the reader for their different character. They are issued together in the hope that the earlier plain and simple words of warning and entreaty, which suit an unsaved soul, may lead many such an one to become a true-hearted believer in Jesus. Then to the young convert the latter part of my subject will open up fresh ground, which will be trodden with joy and gladness as the moral worth and beauty of the newly-found Lord and Saviour is contemplated.

Forty-three years ago, this day, the writer first tasted His saving grace, and the abiding enjoyment of it makes him keenly desire that many others should participate therein. May the Lord graciously deign to use the book to this end, and likewise to feed His hungry lambs and sheep.

W. T. P. W.

46 CHARLOTTE SQUARE,
EDINBURGH, *16th December 1903.*

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

STEADY demand for this volume having exhausted a large first edition, a second is called for. It differs only from the first in the correction of a few printer's errors.

The Lord has been pleased to cheer some of His dear people through its pages, for which to Him be all the praise. May He continue so to use it for His glory is the author's earnest prayer.

EDINBURGH, *1st March* 1909.

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The "Forty Days" of Scripture.

CHAPTER I.

NOAH'S FORTY DAYS.

JUDGMENT AND SALVATION; OR, THE FLOOD AND ITS IMPORT.

(GENESIS vi.-viii.)

EVERY careful reader of Scripture will have noticed how frequently therein the word "Forty" occurs in relation to days or years. All numbers in God's Word have a meaning, and I think there is not very much doubt as to the teaching connected with the number forty. It seems to me that it is usually connected with the probation or testing of man, on the one hand, or, in the government of God, with the penalty and judgment of his sin, on the other.

You have forty days twice in the history of Noah, Moses, and the Lord Jesus, and once each in relation to Joseph, Joshua, Goliath, Elijah, Ezekiel, and Jonah. There are twelve in all. They commence at a moment when God judged the sin of man in his own person, and overwhelming judgment swept away

the sinner. They close in the days of the Lord Jesus, when, sin having been dealt with and put away by His atoning death, He proclaimed the fruits and effects of His victory for saints and sinners alike.

Now I think every person will at once see the meaning of the term. Probation or testing in connection with the first man's history only ends in failure, death, and judgment. I need not say that in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ it was the very reverse. When He was tested by Satan for the first forty days in the wilderness, it only showed the complete and perfect triumph of Christ over the foe of man. And when you come to His second forty days, in resurrection, you get the most beautiful unfolding of what the Second Man brings in, and what is the fruit of His victory over Satan, sin and death. In resurrection our Lord Jesus Christ inaugurates, during forty days, a new era of blessing and glory, founded on redemption.

To-night I address myself to the forty days connected with Noah and the flood. I am very well aware that there is a large amount of doubt with regard to this story, but there is no doubt in my mind. I share not the unbelief of the moment. I believe the Word of God. God is too good—too wise—to allow anything to appear in His Word that cannot be absolutely relied upon. Further, I think that if you have had difficulties as to God's story of the flood, you will show yourself to be a sensible person and truly wise, by letting your difficulties drop, and listening to God.

I shall show you, I hope, by God's help, from His Word, that whether the witnesses be patriarchs, prophets, evangelists, or apostles, and, better than all,

the Son of God Himself, testimony as to the truth of what the book of Genesis says in relation to the flood is absolutely to be relied upon. Perhaps I might, ere I go into detail, seek to clear that point.

We will, first of all, hear what a patriarch has to say. I should like to know, how, deeply bedded in the book of Job, came a statement like this: "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways" (Job xxi. 13, 14). Now Job was a Gentile, not a Jew, but one whom God had enlightened, and who lived certainly some eighteen hundred years after the flood. How came he to write after this sort if God had not given him light? Again, note how he describes the fate and the language of the wicked men of Noah's day. "Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden?" Now, my friends, if you have never marked this way before, I pray you earnestly to-night to mark it. I do not need to press this upon the Christian. I do not need to press upon the one who loves the Lord Jesus to mark this, but to the careless, heedless man of the world, who lives in pleasure and sin, I think the query of Eliphaz here is very important. "Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed with a flood: which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them?" (chap. xxii. 15-17). They did not want God. They did not like God, and even though they heard of God, they would not have His warnings, uttered by Enoch's and Noah's lips.

We are not told in Genesis that they thus boldly and sinfully spoke. No, but we are told by Job. You rarely get the sole statement of the truth or the whole history of a man or of men and their ways in one book of Scripture. Its unity is manifest in the multiplicity of its writers, all moved by God. We get the motives that moved the men of the world told to us by Job, viz., *dislike* of God, while Paul tells us that Noah was "moved by *fear*" of Him (Heb. xi. 7). Job indicates God's dealings with men in the words, "Yet he filled their houses with good things : but the counsel of the wicked is far from me" (xxii. 18). Well now, there is the testimony of a patriarch.

Let us now go and hear what a prophet has to say. Turn to the book of Isaiah, and note the magnificent way that prophet of Israel speaks. He is unfolding the certain and glorious future of Israel—the rejected nation of God at this moment because of their refusal of their Messiah, whose murder is a national sin—and he describes in the most beautiful way, that as a consequence of the God-glorifying pathway of Christ, delineated in his fifty-third chapter, they are going to be brought into wonderful blessing by-and-by. "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me : for, as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth ; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (chap. liv. 8-10). That is to say, He

bears witness by this prophet's pen, that, as "the waters of Noah" had most certainly rolled over "the world of ungodly," so they might depend upon it, that what He promised Israel should yet surely take place.

Now pass to the evangelists, and you will hear what our Lord Jesus Christ says with regard to the flood. He could make no mistakes. Our learned friends, the geologists of the twentieth century, try hard to prove that the story of the flood was a mistake, and not to be believed. The question is, Am I to believe God's Word, or man's inferences? You are wiser to heed God than to pin your faith to a man who has no certain knowledge of what he says, his statements and theories being only deductions from certain given facts, which, after all, he is as likely to misinterpret as his predecessors. We all know how one geological theory after another has arisen, proclaimed loudly its indisputable veracity, and within a century been relegated to the limbo of old wives' fables. You may depend upon it that when God has spoken all is true.

Now hear our Lord Jesus Christ, and note well that, if you give heed to the infidelity of the hour as regards the flood, you have, according to these unbelieving theories, the Lord Jesus Christ committed to a false testimony about a thing that did not happen. He describes what His coming again will be, in view of the Jew—how He their Messiah will come and restore His people. He says: "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and

took them all away ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. xxiv. 37-39). He describes what the effect was of all Noah's preaching. I think it is wonderful the side-light that Scripture flings upon the scene. "They knew not." Had they not had plenty of testimony? Abundance. For a hundred and twenty years did Noah the "preacher of righteousness" indicate the coming storm, which Enoch too had predicted. They had plenty of testimony, but heeded it not. How dull were their ears ! They "knew not until the flood came, and took them all away" is the Lord's affirmation regarding the unbelievers of that day. Then He adds, "So shall also the coming of the Son of man be." And what is that? People were taken unawares in Noah's day, and so will they be when He Himself returns to judge the earth as Son of Man.

Now let us pass to the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, where I find the beloved apostle Paul giving us, by the Spirit of God, his comment upon the flood. The eleventh of Hebrews is a striking unfolding of the history of faith. It shows what faith does, rather than what it is. Abel shows us how to draw near to God, Enoch how to walk with God, and Noah how to be cleared from coming judgment. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. xi. 7). Noah was a wise man. God warned him of "things not seen as yet," and he heeded the warning. The world did not.

Possibly you may say—I cannot understand this. There are many things you do not understand, and

yet you believe them—I mean things in daily life. Noah believed what he did not understand at first, and acted on his faith. Soon he got understanding. Faith understands because faith believes God. Where unbelief sees a difficulty faith does not. Noah believed, acted, and then understood. The two things that moved Noah were faith and fear.

If faith and fear do not move your soul, you will not meet Christ as a Saviour, and there will never be written about you, that God saved you. The reason, my friend, that you have never been saved is that you have never had that faith in the testimony of God which produced in your soul this sense—I had better reach the spot of safety.

Now, what is faith? It is the soul's reception of God's testimony, no matter what shape that testimony take. In Noah's case it was warning from God. And you are going to get your warning. As a sinner there is before you nothing but judgment, as real and deep, and far more terrible than the tale that will pass before us to-night. But you may find a place of safety. You say, Where is it? You have not to prepare an ark, because God has prepared one. Christ is the place of safety now. He bore all the judgment and the wrath, rose from the dead, and is now at God's right hand. What is the ark for you and me to-day? It is the knowledge of a risen Christ. It is our souls, moved by faith and fear, getting to know the blessedness of safety in Him. Just as Noah "became heir of the righteousness which is by faith," so to-day the man that believes God is counted righteous. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 3).

But now one more witness. We will hear what the apostle Peter has to say. Just turn to his first epistle for a moment, where we read, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (chap. iii. 18). Now, what could be more blessed than this? If I were to come and only tell you of "judgment to come," that would be a poor thing if I could not also tell you of a Saviour. There is now for you a living Saviour, a loving Saviour, One who has died and risen again.

Observe how Peter weaves in the tale of the flood in connection with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins." Whose sins? His own? God forbid, He had none. Well, you say, everybody's. I tell you what faith says, Mine. Faith is always individual. Each soul has to appropriate the truth for itself. "If *thou* shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, *thou* shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 9). But here is the great and glorious truth, that "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." To what end? "That he might bring us to God"—there I get the very essence of the gospel—"Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."

It is not a dead Christ I tell you of to-night. I know that men have usually painted a dead Christ. Or, again, it is Christ on the crucifix. That is not God's Christ. There is no such Christ. It is not now Christ on the cross, nor Christ in the grave. It is Christ on the throne. Christ living, Christ triumph-

ant, Christ victorious. The blessed glory-crowned Man, who was once in death, bearing sins, having atoned for them, having annulled death, and defeated Satan, rose from the dead, and there, at God's right hand, faith sees Him, a living Man, and a loving Saviour. Can you say by faith, "Jesus is my Saviour"?

But further, the apostle says that Christ was "quickened by the Spirit; by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water" (iii. 19, 20). I know there is an idea current that Christ, when dead, went down and preached to the spirits in prison. Such an idea is, in my judgment, erroneous. It was the Spirit of Christ, in Noah, which, ere the flood came, preached to those who are now in prison. And this thought is confirmed by another scripture, "For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Pet. iv. 6).

What was waiting in Noah's day? Long-suffering. How did Noah preach? By the Spirit of Christ. What brought Christ from heaven? Love. What did He want? Your salvation. The same Christ that speaks in love by the gospel to men now, spoke in Noah's day; and although judgment was certain, He sent by the lips of His righteous servant a testimony which exactly suited the moment. What was the end of it? Nobody believed. Did Noah get a convert? No, he did not; still he went on with his ark and his preaching. What about the people that

heard him? Do you think it will be any comfort for them in eternity that they might have been saved, but are not? You know better. Why did they miss salvation? Because they "sometime were disobedient" (iii. 20). Ah! they will not be disobedient by-and-by, because everybody must bow to Christ sooner or later.

How were the eight saved who escaped the flood? By that ark. You will say, It was very few. I admit it; but is not the fact of the fewness an awful testimony to the power of the world, and the unbelief of man's heart as regards judgment. A man came to Jesus in His day and said, "Are there few that be saved?" Let me ask you this, Are you among the few? Well you say, Are you? Yes, by the grace of God I am, or I could not stand here and tell you of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and present salvation. Do you know what the Lord said to that man? "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke xiii. 23, 24). You must get in individually. That is the point, and I say to you, see to it that you personally get Christ.

But the fact of some being saved from the flood is not the only testimony that Peter gives. When I come to the next chapter I find this, "Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead" (1 Pet. iv. 5). The moment is coming when you must meet the Lord Jesus Christ, and you must give account to Him. "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." Who were they? The antediluvians. They heard a suited gospel in their

day. Judgment was coming, and there was a place of safety. Alas ! they despised the testimony ! What is the testimony to-day ? Judgment is coming, deeper than the judgment of that day ; but salvation is preached, and there is a place of safety. It is to be *in* Christ. Many persons have thought they were all right because they have what they call "joined the church." But if you have not been born again, if you have not been brought to know your sins forgiven, if you have not trusted Jesus as your Saviour, take care lest you repeat antediluvian history. What was God's object with men in Noah's day ? That they might "live according to God in the spirit" (chap. iv. 6). Men declined His proffered grace, and perished. Imitate them not.

But go a little further. In Peter's second epistle I find, in speaking of God and His ways, he says, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment ; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (2 Pet. ii. 4, 5). God will always judge sin. When Christ was upon Calvary's tree, bearing "the sins of many," what did God do ? He forsook Him ; He abandoned Him. He must judge sin. Similarly He "spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness." Has He saved you yet ? You will never get Noah to deny that the Lord saved him. Further, the Lord speaks of him, by Ezekiel, as a righteous man, "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. xiv. 14). Could I

meet him and inquire, Noah, what happened to you? "God saved me, when He brought in 'the flood upon the world of the ungodly,'" would be his reply. Where did the flood fall? On a world of ungodliness. And what is coming by-and-by? Judgment upon a world of ungodliness.

You will find further and instructive testimony as to the flood in the third chapter: "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance; that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. iii. 1-4).

Is this last statement true? Not at all; hear the apostle's following words: "For this they willingly are ignorant of." A person might be ignorant and be forgiven, but the grave sin of the present moment is this, that the scoffer is "*willingly ignorant*." What of? "That by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished" (2 Pet. iii. 5, 6). What I have read to-night in Genesis vii. is this, that the waters overflowed the world that then was. "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (ver. 7). There is another judgment coming, not water, but fire.

Just as the flood swept over the earth in Noah's day, so will the fiery judgment of God again clear this earth. In the meantime what takes place? A long-suffering testimony with a view to man's salvation. "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" for "the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation" (vers. 8, 9, 15). Now then, why has not the Lord come back? The reason is plain, and Peter gives it to you in connection with the story of the flood. The wonderful tale of the present long-suffering of the Lord is the potent reason of His delay. That long-suffering is salvation to all who will have it. Friend, you may never get another opportunity. Let me tell you this, you may be saved where you now are. You may say, I do not believe in getting converted suddenly. You are rather inclined to go with the scoffers. But if I admit that God did send judgment once, I cannot escape the conviction that it is absolutely certain that He will do it again. If you get converted to-day, and I hope by the grace of God you may, you will remember the story of Noah and the ark.

Let us now turn back to the scripture we started with. I have not very much to say regarding it except this, that we have God's certain testimony as to what did take place, and what led to it. Well now, what was the reason of the flood? The sixth chapter of Genesis gives you the reason. It was this. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great

in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (ver. 5). What came up before God? Sin. What is sin? Man doing his own will. That is sin. Well, you say, Are not things altered now? Are our days not better? Do you think the men of the twentieth century are one whit better than the men of Noah's day? Not a bit. They may have more light, but they have more responsibility. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. xxvii. 19).

What was the state of man's heart in Noah's day? "*Every* imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" is God's allegation. Was it true then? Is it true to-day? What does God see in the men of this day? What is the difference between the men of that day and this day? There is none. Man is man. You cannot change him. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" (Jer. xiii. 23). No, nor can you change man as man. Take a drunkard, an unsaved man. Reform and polish him up. He is still an unsaved man. Make him moral and respectable. All right, there he is, but he is still the same man, unsaved and unforgiven if he be not born of God. There must be a work of God in his soul. Mark the force of Scripture. Man is wrong at heart. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts" (Matt. xv. 19). Men can read what is outside, but God reads the heart. And what is His testimony? "*Every* imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Well, you say, that is a dreadful character. I admit it. But the most solemn point is, that this is the truth, as to every man then and now. The Lord Jesus said also, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil

thoughts" (Mark vii. 21). Where do they come from? The heart.

But there was more than that, and hence we read that "it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Gen. vi. 6). The next thing affirmed is the outward fruit of man's state: "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence" (ver. 11). Sin in the heart had led to outward evil ways, and deeds before God, that made it at length impossible for Him any longer to forbear, and He was compelled to bring in judgment. And mark again why He did it. He brought in the flood on the world of the ungodly. Now mark, it is a very serious thing to be an ungodly person. Who is that? Every person that is not washed in the precious blood of the Son of God is in that category.

The contrast of God's ways with men to-day is very remarkable. Now it is "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that *justifieth the ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 5). What did God do in Noah's day? He *judged* the ungodly. To-day, because of the death of Jesus, He can *justify* the ungodly. In that day, however, "My spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. vi. 3), was the first intimation from God that judgment was at hand. Then in long-suffering goodness He adds, "Yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." Was there not long patience in that? Was not the opportunity for repentance abundant? Can I promise you one hundred and twenty years of grace now? You have no such promise. "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

God gave men then space to repent during an

hundred and twenty years, and at the same time bade Noah build the ark. The point was this, judgment was coming, but there was time given in which to build that ark. And Noah built it. And now observe what goes on all that while. The Spirit of God was striving with men, who were living carelessly, while Noah was preaching and building at the same time. He was a preacher of righteousness. He was in the truth that he preached. He was a saint, and he stood a witness for God. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house" (Heb. xi. 7).

Noah obeyed God, and preached to men. The men of the world were heedless and disobedient. God's Spirit began to strive quietly. He is doing the same now. No one saw it then. No one sees it now. Take care lest you resist that Spirit once too often. Well, Noah began to preach righteousness. What did the people say? "We do not believe in that." But what was the next thing? He began to build the ark. And here is where the power, wisdom, and triumph of faith came in. Hundreds of miles away from a lake or the sea, this man begins to build this ark. What mean you by this, Noah? There is judgment coming—is his reply. What is this for? An ark of salvation. I do not suppose the men of the world thought it was built on right lines. But he did not care one bit for that. God had given him the lines on which to build (vers. 14-16), so he cared not how they criticised his ark.

Every time his hammer gave a blow, and drove a trenail, do you know what that blow said? Judgment is coming. And so he went on. How long? Till

people said, What an idiot to build a ship and no water to float it in within hundreds of miles. But on he went with his building and preaching. And by-and-by this immense vessel is reared. Doubtless curiosity took many people to see it. Perhaps the lad of ten, the father of fifty, and the grandfather of one hundred and more years saw it together. "What is that?" says the little boy. "That is Noah's ark," says the grandfather, "that he has been building away at for about one hundred and twenty years. When I was young he was at it then, and he has always been talking about judgment coming. One hundred and twenty years have gone by, and nothing has happened. Was there ever such a fool?"

Noah preached all these years, and never got a convert, that I know of. I have often pitied Noah. Preachers long for souls. Thank God, they do get some. We want you for Jesus, my friend. Remember, the moment is coming when the last word will have been heard. So was it in Noah's day. At length the one hundred and twenty promised years rolled by, and then God gave a guilty world seven extra days of grace. "Yet seven days," says the Lord, "and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth" (Gen. vii. 4). He did not promise these seven days, but He gave them. How like God. If you want to be saved, you come to Jesus to-day. There is no promise of seven days of grace to you, unsaved sinner. Be wise. Get into the ark now. It is very simple. Come to Jesus at once and you will be saved.

The Lord then said to Noah, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark," and gladly he obeyed (chap.

vii. 1). And to-day that blessed Saviour says to you, Sinner, come thou! "Come thou and all thy house into the ark," was God's call, "and Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood" (vii. 7). And then, do you know what took place? I think there was a seven days' sermon. From east, west, north, and south, the hand of God gathered the dumb creatures. The people must have thought it curious when those beasts went in. They were wiser than men. They obeyed the call of God. Men would not then, nor do many now, hence God says, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isa. i. 3). These brutes knew the call of the Creator, and they passed in in safety, but man heeded not. Oh, sinner, what a case yours is. Fancy, the very creatures being a testimony against you. They obeyed the call of God. They all came to a spot of safety. Have you?

And now the last day came. It was on the seventh day that Noah went in, and then God shut the door. Then the world saw what it had never seen before. "The same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened" (ver. 11). And then what consternation! To me it is a very striking thing that God has drawn a veil over what happened then. All Christ says is this, "They knew not until the flood came, and took them all away" (Matt. xxiv. 39). They were heedless, unconcerned, careless in their souls until the moment came when judgment overwhelmed them. It is a solemn figure of the awful judgment that is coming upon a Christless world. The waters rose.

Many a man thought he had a way of escape. He was deceived. My friend, you have no escape from judgment to come but Christ. There is only one way, and you will have to take God's way. There is no way but Jesus. You had better come to Jesus, and why not come to Him now? Where you are this moment, trust Him, and Him alone, and you will find that salvation is yours, just as Noah and his family got into the ark and were safe.

And we read, "And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth" (ver. 17). The ark was borne up. And that which was judgment to the world, was safety for Noah. As the waters rose, what rose? This ark. A happy and blessed thing for those in the ark. And now to-night who is safe in this company? Those that have believed Christ; those that have trusted Him in the simplicity of faith. I see those eight go into the ark, and by-and-by I see them come out on resurrection ground.

But first the forty days roll by. Everything is gone. The judgment is universal. Then the waters abate, and the ark rests upon the mountains of Ararat (chap. viii. 4). Then come a second forty days. "And it came to pass at the end of forty days that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made" (ver. 6). For forty days he has been upon solid rock. It is divine security. I have touched the second "forty days." Have you? I am not only in the place of safety, but I have the sense of security. How absolute and perfect is the salvation that God gives. And at the end of those forty days things are quiet, and they come forth out of the ark. "And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean

beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar" (ver. 20). He worshipped. And upon the ground of that burnt-offering, figure of Christ's death and resurrection, God brought in that blessed and precious covenant which you have seen many a time. You have never thought much about the rainbow. When next you see it, just ask yourself, Am I in the ark? There is coming judgment, and far deeper judgment than in that day. Are you safe from that? Well, thank God, I am, and I wish you were too. If you never have really found the Lord Jesus Christ as your own Saviour till this hour, make up your mind and trust Him where you are.

CHAPTER II.

JOSEPH'S FORTY DAYS.

THE EFFECT OF DEATH ; OR, CONSCIENCE AND ITS WORKINGS.

(GENESIS xlix. 33, l. 1-21.)

THE forty days of Joseph are very interesting, because they make manifest the state of the souls of his brethren. The effect of those forty days upon his brethren was very far-reaching, I am persuaded. You see Joseph's brethren had sinned grievously against him, just as you and I have sinned against God, and although there may be a certain acknowledgment, that we are sinners, in everybody's history, there is never settled solid peace with God until a clean breast is made of the sin and the evil.

The reason why so many people to-day—while admitting the truth of Scripture and believing the gospel—are not in the enjoyed possession of forgiveness, salvation, and happy confidence in Christ, is this, that they have never had their guilty history really out with God. The last chapter of Genesis illustrates this very fully. A remembrance of everything, and confession of everything, then took place in the souls of Joseph's brethren. I have no doubt that it was the contemplation of the dead body of their old father for

these forty days which brought it about. Death is a great reality. Men do not like death. They may tell me they do not fear it, and the scripture says truly, speaking of the wicked, "For there are no bands in their death" (Ps. lxxiii. 4); but after all death is a terrible calamity to man generally. I have seen men die carelessly and quite unconcerned, for Satan has got them in his grip, but the people that stand round about do not enjoy it. Oh, the thrill that goes through a man's soul when he first sees death! And it is quite right. The fear of death, of which Scripture speaks, is a right fear in the heart and history of a sinner. If you are kept face to face with death for forty days, as were Joseph's brethren, God will give you time to review your history as they did theirs, and if you are a wise person you will do it. But now I want you to see what led up to this.

Joseph is a very striking type of the Lord Jesus Christ; but the Lord Jesus Christ dead and risen. I do not talk to you of a Christ living on the earth, nor of a Christ dead in the grave, but I have to tell you to-night of a risen triumphant, victorious Man, whom God has made Lord of all. Observe that Joseph is a type of the Lord Jesus in this character. How he reached that position we will see, and to this end I am going to ask you to turn over the leaves of your Bible. We will go back, therefore, at once to the opening chapter of Joseph's history, and that you will find in Genesis xxxvii.

Joseph is introduced to us in verse 2 as a lad of seventeen. I call attention to the age, because what came out at the close was this, his brethren had been partaking of the bounty of his hands for seventeen long years, but did not know his heart. Ah! there

is many a person who has a sense of the bounty of Christ, but who does not know His heart. Well, we find Joseph was loved by his father. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John iii. 35). Joseph has a couple of dreams. First of all, there is the one in which he sees the sheaves in the field bowing down to his sheaf. And then he gets another dream, where the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to him. When he told his dreams his father rebuked him, and his brethren envied him.

This is just the history of Christ. He came into this world, which He had made as well as everything in it, but what took place? He was hated. He was not wanted. So Joseph's brethren hated him. His brothers saw him coming one day, and they said: "Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now, therefore, and let us slay him" (vers. 19, 20). Similarly, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world, and when He came into the world the men thereof said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours" (Mark xii. 7). Joseph's brethren say, "Come now, therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams" (ver. 20). That is to say, they propose to murder him, and then to back up their murder by deceit and lies. That was the proposition, but it was not carried out because Reuben intervened, and Joseph was cast into the pit. But the murder took place with the Lord Jesus Christ. Men did kill Him.

Next we find that Joseph was taken out of the pit, sold for twenty pieces of silver, and became a slave.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver, "a goodly price," says the prophet (Zech. xi. 13). Judas sold his Master and his own soul in one moment. Many a man in this world thinks only of money. But stop, think of eternity, when all the money has gone, and when death has got his cold grip upon you, what then? Oh, my friend, you think of it now.

Joseph is sold to Ishmaelites, and they drag him down to Egypt. His coat of many colours is taken off and dipped in the blood of a goat, and with it his brethren deceive their father. They say to him, "This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no" (ver. 32). They deceived their father. Ah, you say, bad men. Have you never deceived your father? You are going to get time to think about it one day. Oh, but this is a very glaring case. I do not deny it, but sin is sin, my friend, and depend upon it, the day is coming when you will have to face it up. You may try and forget your sins, but stop a bit, God has a great memory and a long look-out. Many many years roll by, in fact they let about forty years roll by before it all came out. But mark, it must come out. "Be sure your sin will find you out," is a God-given word. Now, my friend, I do not know what your sin has been, but it will find you out. Their sin found them out, though the old man, Jacob, was deceived.

We will now pass over the next two chapters, where you have, upon the one hand, the looseness of man in the history of Judah, and, on the other, the wonderful way in which a God-fearing young man is preserved. That is Joseph.

Then we come to the story of the prison-house,

where Joseph is trusted by his master and by the keeper. Everything goes on well in his hand, and you have the story of the baker and the butler, and this is how Joseph is brought to the throne. The butler and the baker had dreams, and he is able to tell them their dreams, for God was with him. He says to the butler: "Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler. But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house" (chap. xl. 13, 14). That is he says, When it is well with thee, think on me. That is like a very touching word of the Lord's. Just before He went into death, He said, "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke xxii. 19). Christ has been cast out by the world, and He expects His friends will make mention of Him. I like to make mention of my best Friend.

That butler owed an immense deal to Joseph. But we read, "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him" (ver. 23). The next chapter (xli.), however, introduces him to Pharaoh. We read that Pharaoh had a dream. He first of all saw seven fat kine, and then seven lean kine, and the lean ones ate up the fat ones. And then he saw seven good ears of corn and seven thin ears, and the thin devoured the full ears of corn, and Pharaoh could not understand what it meant. At this juncture the butler remembered Joseph, and he is brought out of the prison-house. He had gone into death in figure. But what Joseph did not go into really, Jesus went into. Scripture says He went down into death, that

by His dying and rising again He might bring salvation to you and me. The interpretation of Pharaoh's dream is very simple. Seven years of plenty, and seven years of famine, and so great should be the famine that all that was brought forth in the seven good years should be eaten up during the seven years of famine.

Joseph then gives beautiful counsel to Pharaoh. His counsel is this. "Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine" (vers. 33-36). The point was this, the future was to be provided for. Now there is a great principle there. Whatever you do not have, as regards this life, make sure for eternity. Look ahead. The future is there. Well, when Pharaoh hears this wise counsel, he says to Joseph, "Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art; thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou" (vers. 39, 40).

Thus we find Joseph delivered from the pit and the prison-house. Pharaoh exalts Joseph. What a simple figure of the Lord Jesus Christ. Where is He now? Exalted to God's right hand. The Man who

humbled Himself, and went down into death for the glory of God and the salvation of men, because there was no way of escape for them except through His death and resurrection, Him God has put at His own right hand. "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Ps. cx. 1). And again we read: "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven" (angels), "and things in earth" (men), "and things under the earth" (the damned) (Phil. ii. 8-10). Without exception all must bow to Him. You say, When? That is not the point. Thank God, I have bowed now. Have you? Well, you say, I have never found the devil bow to Him, or confess Him as Lord. Ah, that is a bitter piece of work the devil has got to do yet. It is joyous work to me, I love to own Him. I have got into the dying thief's company. And what is that? "Lord, remember me." He owns Him as Lord. That is the moment of blessing you will always find in the soul's history.

Pharaoh says, "Only in the throne will I be greater than thou" (ver. 40). Now, the Lord Jesus is in His own Person God. In the second chapter of Philippians it is exceedingly beautiful to see that what is due to God is going to be rendered to a Man. We read in the Old Testament: "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear" (Isa. xlv. 23). Oh,

but you say, that is God speaking, and He has a divine right to claim this subjection. Quite true, and He will have it. But notice, it is all going to be rendered to a Man, and that Man, the Man of sorrows, the lowly Nazarene. What He can claim as God, He is worthy of as Man, and God is going to make every created intelligence in the universe of God bow to Him, and own Him as Lord. Now, my friend, do not you miss the present moment to own Him.

Next Pharaoh says to Joseph, "See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt" (ver. 41). What a change, from the prison to the palace, and by the side of the king, and he rules over the whole land. Do you know what the Lord Jesus said just as He was leaving this earth? "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18). I believe it. My Master and my blessed Saviour, all power is given unto Him. I glory in being in His company. I glory in His service. I glory that I belong to Him. And if you never belonged to Christ before, make up your mind for Him to-night.

What do we read now? "And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck: and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee; and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt" (vers. 42, 43). I do not doubt that when the cry went out, "Bow the knee," they said, To whom? To Joseph? That slave, that man who was in prison? Never! Methinks I hear many a proud Egyptian prince saying, Never will I bow. Perhaps you have said, I will never bow to

Christ. Ah, wait a bit. Pride never filled your stomach. It may have filled your bosom. What will bring you down? A day of famine.

Observe what follows in our chapter. Joseph was now thirty years of age. Thirteen years had rolled by since he had been sold by his brothers. And now there come the seven plenteous years. And then the seven years of dearth set in. "And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread." Now they were in for a famine, but Joseph's brethren could hang out for two years. And perhaps, my dear friends, you have hung out against the famine. Do you know what brought the prodigal to his father in Luke xv.? There was a famine. Do you know what brought me to Christ forty-three years ago? Famine in my heart. Oh, you have heard the gospel dozens of times. You say, I am not going to have Christ just now. But already you have begun to find that the world does not satisfy you. Yes, you have an empty heart.

Notice, please, Pharaoh's injunction when the people were crying for bread: "And Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; and what he saith to you, do" (ver. 55). God's injunction is similar. Have you got your soul saved yet? No. You must go to Jesus. You would not bow before, but now you are hungry, you are anxious to be saved. Oh, you say, I will go direct to God. People do not want this blessed Man. They will not have Jesus. But stop, if you are going to have salvation you must get it through that Man, or you are never going to have it. Do you understand? Go to Jesus. Will not my works help me? No, and nothing else. You must have Jesus and Jesus only, or die in your sins.

There is only corn where Joseph is. Salvation, typically, was with Joseph, and no one else, and to him all had to go or starve to death. This was true not only of Joseph's brethren, but the whole world.

Let us now come to Joseph's brethren to see how they get on, and what exercise of conscience they go through before they get their need met. Pharaoh says, "What he saith to you, do." Joseph opens the storehouses. When you come to Christ you will find an open storehouse. Jesus is an open-hearted Saviour who will save you on the spot. You must come to Him. Where is He to-night? At God's right hand. Think not of your works, but come to Jesus, and you will find all that you need.

Chapter xlii. shows us Joseph's brethren a second time. After Joseph was governor over the land, and when the famine came where they lived, at length Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt. He says, I hear there is salvation to be had in Egypt, you had better away and get it. Well, away they go. And now they come to buy corn. But you will find that Joseph's brethren did not get it by buying. The money was returned in their sacks. We read, "And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth" (chap. xlii. 6). They, who had opposed him so many years before, what is the first thing they do? They bow down. The moment of real blessing in your soul is when you first bow down to Christ. I do not mean externally, but when, in your soul, there is a bowing to the blessed Lord. But observe what Joseph does. "And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made him-

self strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them" (ver. 7). Joseph knew his brethren. Stop, God knows all about your history, young man. And I tell you what it is, God's ways with our souls are always to bring us into real blessing. But we must get it in God's way. Did they get the corn immediately? No, he spake a little roughly to them. He knew them. You remember that Pharaoh had called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah, which had a double meaning. It signified "A revealer of secrets" in the Coptic, and by collation with the Egyptian language is supposed to mean "Saviour of the age."

Now our blessed Lord Jesus Christ is the true Zaphnath-paaneah. He is the Revealer of Secrets, and the Saviour of the world. Will you turn to the fourth chapter of John, where a poor woman, who is living in open sin, meets the blessed Lord by the well. He says to her: "Go, call thy husband, and come hither. And the woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly." What did she say? "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet" (vers. 16-19). He was the Revealer of Secrets. But what is the next thing? She does not run away. She says: "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he" (vers. 25, 26). He reveals Himself. Because, mark, to a convicted sinner you will always find a Saviour revealed. So it was then. And she went and said to her neighbours, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (ver. 29). The

Samaritans came to Jesus, and thereafter said to the woman, "We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (ver. 42).

Joseph knew the secrets of their hearts. He knew them, but they knew him not. And then it says, "And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies ; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come" (ver. 9). What did they say ? "Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons ; we are *true* men, thy servants are no spies" (vers. 10, 11). Listen. "We are true men." Well, you say, if that is not a lie. Ay. Oh, my friend, you can put on what face you like with me or your neighbour, but you cannot put on a face with God. He knows you. "*True men*," forsooth ! That is their verdict about themselves. What do you think of their hatred and hypocrisy ? True men they were not, and they had to learn it. You too will have to face up about your sin before God, my friend.

What is the next thing ? "And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan ; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not" (ver. 13). Murder will out. "And one is not." That is their way of talking of their getting rid of their brother. They stood in his presence and did not know it. And now we read, "And he put them all together into ward three days" (ver. 17). They got three days in prison, had time to think, and came to this right conclusion : "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress

come upon us" (ver. 21). On the third day Joseph said, Go home, and bring your youngest brother unto me.

As they go back to fetch this younger brother, one of them opens his sack and finds his money in the mouth of it. And we read, "And their heart failed them, and they were afraid" (ver. 28). A bad conscience is an awful companion. But it is a great thing, if you have a bad conscience, to heed it. Ah, how it pulls one up. And they begin to think about their sins. They say, "What is this that God hath done unto us?" (ver. 28). Ah, God knows all about you, my friend. It is like a woman that walked some miles to see a minister one Monday morning. He had been preaching the night before, some miles off, on that text, "Be sure your sin will find you out," and on her entering his study he inquired what he could do for her. "Oh, it's all about that ere book, sir," she replied. "I never spoke about a book," he said. "Oh, yes, it's that ere book, sir." "But I never mentioned a book." Then it came out. Twenty years before she had stolen a book from a friend's house, which she had seen and liked, and now the text had woke her up. "Be sure your sin will find you out." It woke her up. God be thanked if you are waked up.

Joseph's brethren were getting waked up; as they say, "What is this that God hath done unto us?" God was putting His finger upon their consciences. When they get back to their father, they say, "The man, who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country" (ver. 30). My friend, if you could interpret God's ways you would find them to be all love. You think He is rough.

No, no, He loves you with all His heart, and He has given His Son for sinners like you and me.

But their sacks of corn are soon emptied, and the famine was very sore. And their father said: "Go again, buy us a little food. And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food: but if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother. And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words" (xliii. 3-7). My friend, God means you to have everything out sooner or later. If you put it off, it will be an awful thing to have it out with the Lord Jesus Christ at the judgment-seat. Condemnation can be the only issue then.

Joseph's brethren put off going down; but hunger is a cruel taskmaster, so, willing or not, they feel they must go down. "And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this: take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds" (ver. 11). Oh, how many people think they must bring God a present. You say that it is very foolish. Yes, but you think you can propitiate God by what you bring—and a way out of the difficulty is suggested. Take Him a present. You are too late. All His claims have been

met in the death of His Son, and His heart is free to come out now with the fullest blessing.

Well, down they go again. "And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home" (ver. 16). See, what does God want? He wants you brought home. "Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon." And now we read, "And the men were afraid" (ver. 18). Ah! it is wonderful how fear begins to work on the conscience when a sinner feels he is not right with God. They were afraid because the money had been returned. But then Joseph's steward says, "Peace be to you, fear not" (ver. 23). If you are in real exercise of soul, you will sooner or later find somebody with a bit of gospel for you.

Presently we read that Joseph came in, and once more they bow down, and then they ate. And now see what hearts were theirs (and what hearts are ours). "And they drank, and were merry with him" (ver. 34). Think of it. He put them very much at their ease, you say. Yes, but their sin had not yet come out. They did not know at this moment who he was. Young man, how can you eat and be merry when you know your soul is unsaved, and, if you die in your sins, that you are going to everlasting perdition? But such is the heart of man.

But the next chapter takes us a step further. "And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he was yet there: and they fell before him on the ground" (xliv. 14). They had gone away and were on their way home, but Joseph's silver cup was in one of their sacks, so they had to come back. And Joseph was still waiting there. He was waiting for them,

and Judah had a sort of feeling that they were discovered. Joseph says, "What deed is this that ye have done?" (ver. 15); and Judah says, "How shall we clear ourselves?" Friend, are you anxious to clear yourself? Listen to me. Confess your sins. That is the necessity. To that point were Joseph's brethren brought, as they say, "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found" (ver. 16). Tell me, what iniquity was there in relation to the cup? None; but it served to rouse conscience. It brought up the twenty pieces of silver, and the wickedness of their history in days gone by. Well said the poet, "Conscience makes cowards of us all," and miserable was their state as they say to Joseph, "And let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh" (ver. 18). But the truth must come out. And it is a great thing when the conscience is thus divinely reached.

I pass on to chapter xlv., and there I find they are in Joseph's house, and Joseph is with them once more. I do not doubt he felt that the work was done in the conscience. You will find there is a deep sense in their souls of how terrible their guilt was. It is like the third chapter of Romans: "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (ver. 19). I cannot justify myself. I do not want to. Because when my mouth is stopped with the sense of my guilt that is the moment God's mouth is opened in grace, and when I cannot justify myself that is the moment when God will justify me in grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

At this point Joseph says: "Cause every man to go

out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph" (xlv. 1). What a revelation! "Doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you." My friend, does not this bring out the heart of Christ? You know what the Lord said to Saul of Tarsus, who had been bitterly opposing Him. Saul said: "Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" (Acts ix. 5). What did these men hear? "I am Joseph." What did that convicted man hear? "I am Jesus." Oh, come near unto Him. Friend, if you have been afraid of Him, be afraid no more. Let all that fear and dread of bygone days be a thing of the past, and where you are just now say, "Blessed Lord, just as I am, I come."

"And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life" (vers. 4, 5). You see it is the same as you have in the Acts of the Apostles, where the apostle Peter tells the convicted people in chapter ii. that their action in slaying Christ had really been the carrying out of the fore-ordained purpose of God. The guilt of man was none the less of course. "God did send me before you to preserve life." Jesus says, I know you have sinned against Me, and you have not loved Me, but see what God sent Me before you to do. To save your lives by a great deliverance. Blessed Saviour! He has come and given

Himself for our sins, and now He invites the confidence of every heart that is here. And tell me, will you not trust Him? Is Jesus not worthy of the confidence of your heart? So was Joseph, and I find they did to a certain measure trust him, but not fully, as the sequel shows.

Now let us pass on to chapter 1. Seventeen years have rolled by. Jacob was one hundred and thirty years old when he went down to Egypt, and he died at one hundred and forty-seven. Joseph's brethren lived in Goshen, and he had lavished his love upon them, but after all they did not know his heart. It is very like what one often meets nowadays. People have believed the gospel in a certain way, but they have not had it all out between God and themselves, and therefore they do not know His heart. It was similar in the case of Joseph's brethren. There had not been any real confession on their side. Little wonder they were not perfectly at ease. They thought it was all right so long as their father lived, but when he passed away matters had to be settled. Joseph at length has to lay his father at rest, and Scripture gives us this simple but striking account of what took place. There was this mourning for forty days.

Let us go into the chamber of death. It will do you no harm. It was not for one day, but for "forty days." Every one of those ten men then said to himself, It has come, the old man is gone, and what will happen now? Again conscience woke up. As they look at the corpse of their father, their conscience works. You face death for forty days, and I tell you what you will do. You will say to yourself, I should like to be right with God; I should like to be right in view of death myself. So, evidently, death

told on these men tremendously. Look at the effect on them. The funeral was over. "And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him" (ver. 15). So, sometimes, speaks an undelivered soul of the Lord. Christ hate you? My friend, He loves you deeply, tenderly, truly. Oh, there is no love like the love of Jesus.

Notice the next thing which Joseph's brethren do. They send a messenger. They would have been far happier if they had gone themselves individually. "And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin." I have a very grave doubt whether the old man did say this, but they knew the time had now come when they had to get thoroughly right with Joseph, and this could only be effected by an honest acknowledgment of the past. So with you, my friend, and God. If you do not confess downright you will never get peace. Hear David's statement regarding this: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer" (Ps. xxxii. 3, 4). This misery was his while he cloaked up his sin. Now note the contrast, and how he illustrates the New Testament statement: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9). He evidently made a clean breast of all his sin in regard to Bathsheba, as detailed in Psalm li. Observe the result. "I acknow-

ledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. xxxii. 5). So say Joseph's brethren. "For they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him" (ver. 17). What is the meaning of that? Their distrust pained him. Beloved friend, if you want to chill and pain the heart of Christ, distrust His love. Nothing touches our hearts like being distrusted. He loves to be fully trusted.

"And his brethren also went and fell down before his face," when they found what was in his heart—tenderness, nothing but love. They are at his feet most truly, and most real in their confession. "And they said, Behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God. But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive" (vers. 19, 20). He does not minimise their guilt, but pardons it in grace.

The curtain falls on this instructive history with words which surely made their hearts profoundly happy. And if you have had a doubt about the goodness of God, hug that doubt no more. "Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones." He cares for them. Yes, "And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them" (ver. 21). It is the ministry of love. Friend, trust the Lord Jesus. If you have never yet been able to say, I really can believe my Saviour, will you not say it to-day? Lord Jesus, I bow, and I come to Thee. I

own my Saviour. Have it all out with Him. And what will you find? "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Should this be the case, I think you will be thankful for Joseph's forty days. If where you are just now you turn to Him, with "Lord, I believe," you will find He will fill your soul with peace, and joy, and gladness just where you are. Now, friend, do be simple, and trust Him now.

CHAPTER III.

MOSES' FORTY DAYS.

LAW AND THE CURSE, OR MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY AND FAILURE.

(EXODUS xxxii. 1-28; DEUTERONOMY ix. 8-17.)

WE read in the first chapter of the gospel of John that "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (ver. 17). Now there is the greatest difference possible between law and grace. To-day, you know, you and I are in the day of grace. It is what is called in Luke "the acceptable year of the Lord" (chap. iv. 19). The day of His judgment is coming. We are not in the day of law. Not, mind you, that I am setting aside the law, but it is the day of grace. Moses brought law. The Son of God brought grace. A servant might come and tell man what the claims of God upon man were, but only the Son of God could unfold the heart and nature of God. Moses could not do that. Only Jesus, only that blessed One who is the Son of God, could reveal God.

Truly grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. He has indeed

"A Name, which must all names displace,
With me, a lost one, saved by grace."

Whether that Name has got a place in your heart, I do not know. If you have not yet learnt that you are lost, that you have not kept the law, and that you cannot keep it, and if you have not learnt that you are under the curse, I very much doubt if you have turned to Jesus, because it is need that turns the sinner to Christ. Until I learnt that I was lost, until I learnt that I was absolutely undone, I did not turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. When the question of righteousness is raised, then it is that the soul has to learn its own weakness, and that it cannot answer the claims of God.

What is the value of the law? Scripture replies, "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound" (Rom. v. 20). It came in to make manifest what man was. God knew what was in his heart, but he did not know, as I shall show you in a minute or two, and the forty days of Moses suffice absolutely to bring out the utter weakness of man, and in plain language, the lost estate of man. Forty days was quite enough. Now there are two "forty days" in Moses' history, as also there are two "forty days" in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. You have the first "forty days" of the Lord Jesus, when in the wilderness He is tempted by Satan, and then He comes out and men are blessed by His ministry of love. And then came the second "forty days" after the resurrection, of which I shall speak another time, God willing. There are two "forty days" in connection with law-giving, and two in connection with the One who is the Saviour, the personification of grace.

I will not go into the history very much to-night, because it would occupy too much time. But I want

to show you what came out when this remarkable man, Moses, was on the mount with God.

✓ The Lord had delivered Israel out of Egypt. He had broken the power of the enemy. He had taken them through the Red Sea, had brought them out to the wilderness, and now they were at Horeb. Down came manna to them day by day, and pure water from the rock. "For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. x. 4). Over their heads was the Cloud, which, like a huge umbrella, shaded them by day from the heat, and night by night they had light. The Lord was their light, and their all, I may say. Do not forget there were a couple of million people there, and to them Moses could say, "Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years" (Deut. viii. 4). Such was God's care of them.

Possibly you say, do you believe it? Well, Scripture says it, and God never tells lies. I am prepared to believe God. You leave God out, and I can see your difficulties. But there is no difficulty when God is in view; hence we find Moses maintained of God for forty days upon the mount. And such was the case with Israel. God had brought them out of Egypt in absolute grace. The grace of God brought them out, and it was grace that led them on right up to the moment the law was given. You will find their whole history recounted in the Psalms. First of all you have their grace-history, nothing but goodness and grace, and it is all about the Lord and what *He* did (Ps. cv.). When you read the 106th Psalm it is what *they* did. How they grumbled and murmured, and how they disbelieved God, and then what came in? Mercy. But in between their history when God

brought them out, and dealt with them in pure grace, and the tale of mercy, when everything was lost through Israel's sin and idolatry, came the threefold giving of the law, in order that God might let man learn what was in his heart. For long I did not know what was in my heart, nor what was in God's heart. The greatest surprise that a man gets in this world, and which I got was this, that when I had sinned, and was far away from God, that God not only could save me, but would save me, and He has saved me. That was what was in His heart. It is a wonderful thing when a person learns that.

Now turn to Exodus xix. It gives us the record of the first giving of the law ; and we will see how it came out. Now you know that in His nature God is love as well as light. God's love acts even though man has sinned. That is the way of grace. What is grace? Grace is love in activity after man has sinned. God is love, and God was love, go as far back into eternity as you can. Love is the nature of God. From Israel's start out of Egypt to Horeb there was nothing but pure sovereign grace on God's part right along the whole line. Now there comes another thing. Law is introduced. The apostle Paul distinctly says, "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man." Why? Because a righteous man does not need it. He is walking rightly. Who is the law made for? I am going to quote you Scripture in order that you may not misunderstand me. "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves

with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine " (1 Tim. i. 9, 10).

The law came in, what to do? To make manifest what man was. He did not know himself. But it did not put him right. Men were in utter ruin by nature and departure from God before the moment that the law came in, but "sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. v. 13). Again the law brings in wrath, for it is written, "Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom. iv. 15). God did not give it with the view of justifying. He says distinctly, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Rom. iii. 20). The object of the law then was not to justify. It was to make manifest where man was and what he was, that he might learn his own helpless ruin, and then turn to God to learn what He is. I believe the giving of the law was distinctly what I may call a retrograde action on the part of God. In the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I find God coming down and talking with these men in the most simple way possible. But when He raises with man the question of righteousness, He has to retire into thick darkness. Notice, the promise of God, which is pure grace, is one thing, and the law is quite another. The apostle Paul works that out in Galatians.

Now, what is promise? It is unconditional grace, though it may be measured by the extent of the promise. God had said to Abraham, "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" (Gen. xxii. 17). Moses had got

hold of and remembered that promise, for when God says, after Israel's sin of the golden calf, "Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I *will make of thee a great nation*" (Exod. xxxii. 10); he, so to speak, rejoins, "Lord, you will in that case have to recall what you said to Abraham." Note his request—"Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever" (Exod. xxxii. 13). Had Moses not been utterly self-forgetful and devoted to God's interests, and Israel's blessing as His people, he would have said, This is a fine chance for me. But look at that man. He declines his own advancement, and puts God in memory of the promise He had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is very fine.

But again I inquire—Why does the law come in? To raise the question of righteousness, and prove that man, on the ground of responsibility, which involves behaviour, has lost all and can claim nothing. I will illustrate. I go into a friend's house and I meet a child, little Mary, whom I know well. I say, "Mary, I am coming back next week, and I will bring you some oranges." Well, when I come back, she is at the gate to meet me, and she gets the oranges, because I *promised* them, and she enjoys them. Supposing, on the other hand, I had said to her, "I am coming back again next week, and I shall bring you a bag of oranges, *if* I learn from mother that there has been a week of perfectly good behaviour." She is on her behaviour now. Very well, I come back next week,

and I open the garden gate, but I do not see Mary. "Where's Mary?" "Oh," says the mother, "I am sorry to say—." "Ah! I understand." I have the bag of oranges all right, but upon her behaviour she has lost them. Upon behaviour, everything is lost before God. But you can get all through grace. There is not a thing the heart of God can furnish you with that you cannot get through grace. Peace, pardon, and salvation, may be yours, through grace, but upon behaviour, not one thing. There is where the value of the law comes in. It teaches me that I am powerless, guilty, and lost.

Now we will go back to the nineteenth chapter of Exodus. "In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." That was the expression of His own goodness. That was unconditional grace. "Now therefore, *if* ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine" (vers. 1, 3-5). There is a condition—obedience—brought in. And now mark, without even waiting to hear what the demands of the law were, as given in chapter xx., look at the blindness that leads Israel to say rashly and boldly, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (ver. 8). And what was it? They were to obey His voice. It was quite right that God should make claims, and there

is not a man in this hall whose conscience does not tell him that the claims of the law are right. And what does the law tell me? It tells me what I ought to be as a responsible creature of God. It tells me my responsibility to God and my neighbour, and ensures a curse on failure therein. "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Now do you not see their blind folly? They did not even wait to learn the character of the claim that God was going to make, nor the responsibility that they were going to accept. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever" (ver. 9). Ah, it was not now face to face work. It was not like the Lord coming down to Abraham and speaking to him as in days gone by. No. I retire, says God. As far as the unfolding of what God is in His nature, save as to holiness and righteousness, the introduction of law was retrogression on God's part. Man could only fail, and then God could only judge.

And now see how the law is unfolded in what Moses elsewhere calls "the day of the assembly" (see Deut. ix. 10, x. 4, xviii. 16). "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death" (vers. 10-12). Look at that. "Draw near to me," says God, "and you die." And

that is why the apostle says it was the "ministration of death (2 Cor. iii. 7)."

"And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud ; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God ; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire ; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount ; and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount ; and Moses went up. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish. And Moses said unto the Lord, The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai ; for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it " (vers. 16-21 and 23). This awful display of glory caused the people to tremble, and Moses even to fear and quake exceedingly (Heb. xii. 21). Thereafter the terms of the law—the ten words—are given in full (xx. 4-17), the effect of which is immediate.

The people turned and said to Moses, We would rather you spoke to God, than have to do with Him ourselves. They look for a mediator. "And all the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking : and when the people saw it they removed and stood

afar off" (Exod. xx. 18). Law must drive you from God. It does not draw to God. It is the full revelation of God's claims upon me as His creature, claims which, if I know myself, I am sure I cannot fulfil. "And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (ver. 19). They could not face God. Upon that ground—the fulfilment of the creature's responsibility—no one can face God.

You have the ten words unfolded to you in chapter xx. The first table of the law gives you man's responsibility, and his due God-ward. Then you get the responsibility of man with his neighbour. You remember the lawyer who came to the Lord Jesus in His life and said, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life." The Lord says: "What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live" (Luke x. 25-28). Who has done it? No man here to-night could say, I have done it. You know your own heart. Have you loved God with all your heart? You have not. And your neighbour as yourself? No, my dear friend, if you take that ground you never can know what God's salvation is. You may be interested in your neighbour, but have you loved him as yourself? No. Does anybody think they are going to get to heaven upon that ground? I am certain that I shall get there, but not on that ground, and I will tell you why.

One night, a few years ago, when I was in a hotel seeing a patient, there was a knock at his bedroom

door. His wife went to the door, and then came back. Soon some one knocked again, and again she went to the door. Shortly there came a third knock, and again she went, but said nothing to me. I began to wonder whether I was the person wanted, and having finished my visit left. Outside on the landing stood a waiter, who said, "Doctor, your house is on fire." I flew down the stairs and out into the darkness, for my wife was very ill at the time. It looked very like my house at a distance, as I saw flames breaking forth from the roof, but as I got up the hill some one met me and said, "It is not your house, doctor, it's your neighbour's." "Thank God!" came right out of my lips. I was honest, but it showed me that I cannot go to heaven on the ground of loving my neighbour as myself. Nor can you. No man can stand on that ground before God save the Lord Jesus. If you fancy that you can, you will wake up to find out by-and-by that you are in hell, not heaven. If you are going to heaven, it will be by the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ only. But if any have an idea they are going to wend their way into heaven by works, they will eventually discover that it is all a mistake. Oh, no, you cannot get to heaven on that ground.

A rich ruler also came to Jesus and said, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The Lord says to him, "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother." And he said, "All these have I kept from my youth up." And what does the Lord say? "Yet lackest thou one thing." And what was that? "Sell all that thou hast and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven."

If he really loved his neighbour as himself he must do that. If he had £5,000 he would have to give someone else £2,500. And then he would give the half of that to some other person, and so on till all was gone. You say he would very soon have nothing left. Just so, but there is the principle. And the Lord bids him make short work of it, "And come, follow me." What took place? "And when he heard this he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich" (Luke xviii. 18, 20-23). He loved his money more than eternal life or his neighbour. Everybody gets tested in that way.

Law is very useful, but it cannot save man. The law is undoubtedly the perfect rule of what the creature ought to be, both in relation to God and his neighbour. But while it may tell me what I ought to be, it does not fit me to be it. The law neither gave life, power, nor an object. Further, "if righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. ii. 21). But the law, I repeat, does not give me life, nor power, nor an object. What does the gospel do? It gives me all three. I get life as the gift of God in Christ; then the Holy Ghost seals the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ; and an object for the heart is found in the person of the Blessed Lord. The difference between the law and the gospel is absolutely immeasurable. One detects and judges me, the other reveals God and saves me. Are you going to turn back to the law to get to heaven? Moses' forty days should correct you.

Let us now pass on in Exodus till we come to chapter xxiv., where the Lord bids Moses come up to Him in the mount. There we read: "And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai,

and the cloud covered it six days : and on *the seventh day* he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud " (vers. 15, 16). I think that is very interesting. You remember after the hundred and twenty years in Noah's day, there was a little pause of seven days before the stroke of judgment fell. It is very noticeable there was also a pause of seven days before the forty days of Moses. " And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount : and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights " (vers. 17, 18).

What occurred in those forty days? The next seven chapters of Exodus are occupied with unfolding this. Nothing could be more interesting and blessed than what is unfolded to Moses during these forty days. He went up, I quite admit, to receive from the hand of God the law ; and the people thought he was only gone up to get that law ; but what was God thinking about? He was thinking about Christ all that time, and He was telling Moses about Christ, in figure, type, and shadow. The next seven chapters, from chapter xxv. right on to the end of chapter xxxi., are all about Christ. " How about Christ? " you say. " He was not born. " I know that. But it was a marvellous unfolding of Christ's Person and His work in figure, type, and shadow.

Now I will ask you to glance over those chapters. You will read with interest how those forty days were spent by Moses in the presence of the Lord, as God unfolds to him in figure, type, and shadow, the life and death of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Therein we see the way in which God can come out to man, and

how man can go in to God through the work, the death, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, those were wonderful forty days! To apprehend their teaching is of the last importance.

First, notice what we find in chapter xxv. "And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may *dwell among them*" (ver. 8). That is God's main idea. "According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it" (ver. 9). Observe the first thing commanded to be made. "And they shall make an ark of shittim wood" (ver. 10). What is that ark? Christ. Of course it was Christ. Eleven articles are named, and all pointed to Christ. First of all, you have the ark. What is the next thing? The mercy seat. "And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof" (ver. 17).

Do you know what happened afterwards, when Moses brought down the tables of stone the second time? He put them into the ark. Why? Because there was never any man but Christ who kept the law. If it be a question of the first man's responsibility, failure is immediately manifest; all is gone. Hence Moses breaks the first tables of stone at the base of the mount. But in that ark the second tables of stone were placed, and there they remain till this day. When you get to Solomon's reign, which is a picture of the future millennial reign of our Lord Jesus Christ, there was nothing in the ark but the two tables of stone. The golden pot with manna and Aaron's rod that budded have then disappeared. They speak of Christ, seen here once in lowly grace

and then exalted, and of His priestly grace, which meets the saints of God in wilderness days. The tables of stone tell a different tale. By-and-by when "a king shall reign in righteousness," there shall be the establishment of that law which the tables of stone reveal. It shall be written in Israel's heart, and everything shall be according to it.

The mercy seat was Christ. Where did God meet man in that day? When the priest came to the ark, where did he put the blood? On the mercy seat once, and before the mercy seat seven times. In Romans we read, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (a mercy seat) through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom. iii. 25). How can I draw near to God now? On the ground of the blood which is sprinkled on that mercy seat.

The third thing telling us of Christ is the pure table of shittim wood whereon the shewbread was placed (ver. 23). And now we come to the fourth thing. "And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made" (ver. 31). Again, this is Christ, and all the light that Christ bears and sheds within the holy place.

Passing on to the next chapter, you get the tabernacle with its "ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, with cherubim of cunning work" (xxvi. 1). This is the fifth thing. It is a lovely picture of Christ. How has God revealed Himself? The apostle Paul replies: "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building" (Heb. ix. 11). Christ is the precious antitype of all this

striking imagery. I view that tabernacle, and I look at the inside curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and cherubim (ver. 1). What do they tell us of? Nothing but Christ. We must, however, not now forget that everything is taken out of type, and is seen in a living man at God's right hand. The day of ritual is over, and the ritualist is quite out of date now. To revive ritual is to ignore Christ really. The veil, spoken of in chapter xxvi. 31, is an exquisite type of Christ. The *blue* gives His heavenly character; the *purple* His imperial rights as King of kings and Lord of lords; the *scarlet* indicating that He is King of the Jews; also, the fine twined linen tells us of His spotless humanity; the cherubim—always in Scripture the executors of God in judgment—telling that all judgment is placed in His hands. How wondrous, later, to find that veil rent, and ourselves brought to the knowledge of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, having title to go inside the rent veil through His blood. He who will be the judge has Himself borne the judgment of God that we might be delivered.

In chapter xxvii. we come to the sixth thing. "And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood . . . and thou shalt overlay it with brass" (vers. 1, 2). There we find an unmistakable figure and type of the cross of Christ, where all the claims of God were met by Christ. If anybody went towards the tabernacle in that day, what was the first thing that met his eye? The brazen altar and the sin offering on it. I draw near to God through that brazen altar: on the cross Christ has met all the claims of God, and any claim that God could bring against me as a sinner has been answered and met by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now go a little further. In chapters xxviii. and xxix. you have the priests, their anointing, and all about their garments. It is the way in which God brings us back into His own presence. He brings you inside the veil, and there you find the high priest. He represents the people before God. "Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord *upon his two shoulders* for a memorial." Again: "And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment *upon his heart*, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually" (xxviii. 12-29). What is that? It is Christ risen from the dead: Christ the great High Priest bearing each one up before God. It is love bearing me on His shoulders of everlasting power, and on His breast of undying affection. What a picture this was that Moses got on the mount. It would be a very profitable thing for you and me to consider these "forty days" very thoroughly.

Now pass to the thirtieth chapter. "And thou shalt make an alter to burn incense upon: of shittim wood shalt thou make it . . . and thou shalt overlay it with pure gold . . . and Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations" (vers. 1, 3, 7, 8). Now, what is the teaching of this golden altar of incense? I think it is this. There is going up before God all the fragrance, the sweetness, and the perfection of what Christ was as a man. The precious incense, which went up as a sweet savour to God, speaks of the infinite graces of Christ's person and ways as man,

and, as being all for God, was burnt on the golden altar.

But there is something more to observe regarding the statement: "And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations" (ver. 8). When God lights a light it never goes out. If the light of God has got into your soul, it is there. The lights were lit in the tabernacle, and they were never to go out. There are two things you do not find in the furniture of the tabernacle, neither an extinguisher, nor a seat. The light is never to be put out. Satan cannot manufacture an extinguisher for the light that God has lit in any soul, and God has not manufactured one. If the light is there it will remain. It may get low. I tell you what He often does. God trims the wick. And I daresay most of us Christians are the better of a trimming. I like to meet a man who trims me. I get brightened up when I get near an earnest, warm-hearted Christian. Do not you? No! Then I do not think you are a Christian at all. But it is very striking there is no extinguisher, as I have said, and further there was no seat. The work of the priest in that day was never done. Now look at this: "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. x. 12). His work is done. The Lord Jesus exceeds and rises above all types and shadows of which He is the divine antitype. His work is done, and He has sat down. In that glorious fact I rest. Do not you?

But further, Moses is told, "Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle

of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein" (ver. 18). This was most needful for the ministering priests. As Christians we need to have our hands and feet washed (John xiii.). I must have the feet washed. In going through this wilderness I need to have the water of the Word of God applied to my conscience and heart as a believer. It will give the sense of cleansing. I need what Ephesians v. speaks of. "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (vers. 25, 26).

Now, do you know what the laver is for? Cleansing. It is the washing of water by the Word. Can you tell me the size of that laver? I cannot tell you. No record of its size is given. Solomon's laver, or molten sea, "received and held three thousand baths" (2 Chron. iv. 5). In the established kingdom of the Son of Man all will be according to law—*measured*. But it is a remarkable thing that the size of the laver for the tabernacle in the wilderness is unrecorded. It is not measured. It suggests the thought that you cannot measure the applicability of the Word of God. It is wonderful how God's Word meets the soul in its varied conditions, and therefore there is no measure. What meets one person would not meet another. The Word of God can only be applied by the Holy Ghost, and there is no limitation to the way in which that Word is applied. The unmeasured laver gives the idea of the immeasurable breadth, length, and universal value of the Word of God to meet the multitudinous necessities of souls as we pass through this scene.

Following the instructions as to the laver, we read that the Lord bade Moses take certain principal spices

and make "an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary : it shall be an holy anointing oil" (xxx. 22-33). Without doubt we here read of the Holy Spirit of God. It was not to be put upon man's flesh. The blood of atonement must always precede it. The oil was put on the blood, teaching us that the Holy Ghost falls only upon a man who has been born of God, and led to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, dead for his sins, and risen. This is most strikingly borne out in the New Testament, where we read, "In whom ye also trusted *after* that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation ; in whom also, *after* that ye believed, *ye were sealed* with the holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13).

Only one point more do I notice. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum ; these sweet spices with pure frankincense : of each shall there be a like weight" (ver. 34). They made therewith that beautiful incense, which was to be burnt upon the golden altar. All the fragrance, the sweetness, and the perfections of Christ, in His life and ways as a lowly man, walking in grace on earth, are here indicated. Burnt on the altar morning and evening, their sweet savour went up before God. If you and I do not appreciate Christ, God does. If you do not appreciate the love that led Him down to death, even the death of the cross, God does.

Well, that was what Moses was being instructed about during those forty days. You should look at these instructions regarding the sanctuary more in detail at your leisure. They are summed up in chapter xxxi. You will find the eleven things I have just indicated named in verses 7-11. God puts them all

together there. It is just a little picture of what the Lord Jesus is in His person, His offices, and His work. If you have never yet studied these types of the Old Testament, let me urge you to sit down and do it. They are replete with blessing for the soul. The Old Testament is the picture book of Christ, and by these figures, types, and shadows, we learn wondrously what Christ is, and what Christ has done. What could be more wonderful than this that Moses learns, that there is a mercy seat based on righteousness. All the claims of God have been met in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then there is the blood of atonement that gives me title to draw near, and the cherubim fixedly gaze on that sprinkled blood. I find the table, and on it there is the bread. I am to eat. I find the light, and am in it, to enjoy all that Christ is. I am in all the light of the purposes of God. Then I am brought to the brazen altar—the cross that gives me a title to glory. God, so to speak, takes me by the hand, and says, You can come in. The claims of the brazen altar have all been met, and the sprinkled blood witnesses that by His atoning death Christ has settled the sin question. And then you find a Priest that maintains you in the presence of God. He bears you in His heart and on His shoulders. You find in His company light that you can enjoy, and food which you can eat. Then the oil—the Holy Ghost—put on us, gives us power for access to God in all the fragrance of the incense of Christ's perfection. The thought of God is not to keep us at a distance, but to bring us near in the enjoyment of all that Christ is.

That was what Moses was favoured to see during

these forty days. And what were the people doing all the time? Let us come down to earth and see. The first word of the law which they had so readily accepted, was this—"Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exod. xx. 3). Alas! when Moses comes down he sees a golden calf, and Israel dancing round about it. They could not walk by faith. They had said, "As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (chap. xxxii. 1). He comes down to find that the people have committed the most awful idolatry. And they are positively saying, regarding the golden calf, "This is the Lord." Aaron, alas, was with them in it. God then says that He will judge them, and make of Moses a great nation. But Moses, as we have seen, sets himself aside, turns to God in intercession for the people, and says, "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people" (vers. 13, 14).

When Moses comes down he has the two tables of stone in his hand, and do you know what took place? He felt he could not take them down, so he smashed them at the base of the mountain. It says, "And Moses' anger waxed hot" (ver. 19). A very striking word that. I think I see his face flash with righteous anger, as he regards the people's sin and idolatry, and takes in the consequences of the broken law. Do you know how he came down the next time? With his face shining in the most wonderful way. Do you

know why? He had learned then what "mercy" was. Here he knows that it is all over with Israel on the ground of responsibility and law. And what is the next thing? He says, "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me" (xxxii. 26). Out steps Levi, and three thousand men died that day. When the law was broken, three thousand men died (ver. 28). Did you ever notice what took place on the day of Pentecost, the day of grace? The day the Holy Ghost came down three thousand men were saved (Acts ii. 41). Striking contrast! The day the Holy Ghost came down to tell of an ascended Christ in glory, who had made atonement before He went up, three thousand men were saved. And since then, what has been happening? Why, salvation like a shining river has been rolling through this world, and countless millions have drunk of it. Have you? If not, drink to-night.

Do you think that the law can help you or save you? Let the apostle Paul give you one little word as to this: "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man *is not justified by the works of the law*, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and *not by the works of the law*, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. ii. 15, 16). How then can God justify a guilty sinner? On the ground of the finished work of His own blessed Son on the cross, and of the simple faith on the sinner's part in His Son and the work of His Son, which the charming figures we have been noticing portray so beautifully. Understand this, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is

written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. iii. 10). Failure on one point brings me in guilty of all, as says the apostle, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Jas. ii. 10).

I tell you, my friends, there is only one man fit for God, and that is the Man in the glory, the Lord Jesus Christ. He kept the law perfectly. And did He not keep it for me? I do not think that is the way in which Scripture presents it. The point is this, He proved what He was in all His blessed obedience, and when He had manifested what was in Himself, He went to the cross and died for the man that had broken the law. And what did He do? He wound up and ended the history of that man, when He died on the cross for the guilty sinner who had broken it, and then He rose from the dead, the head of a new race. Notice what the apostle Paul says: "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. iii. 11-13).

If you are going to have blessing it must be on the ground of faith, not works. Christ has hung on a tree, and He has taken the curse for us. I see that Christ has endured the curse of a broken law, and that I am clear through His death, so, "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (ver. 14). How do you get the

Spirit? By faith. How do you get pardon? By faith. "The just shall live by faith." Well, if any man here thinks he can stand before God on the ground of works or law, how vain is the thought. But how blessed to see that God during these forty days on the mount, was, in striking type, unfolding to Moses His thoughts, purposes, and counsels, regarding Christ and His work, to the end that Christ might be the object of faith and love on the part of all who hear of Him. God help you from this night out to simply rest on the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER IV.

MOSES' SECOND FORTY DAYS.

MERCY AND BLESSING ; OR, GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND ITS WAYS.

(EXODUS xxxii. 30-35, xxxiii. 1-23, xxxiv. 1-9, 27-35 ;
DEUTERONOMY ix. 25-29, x. 1-5.)

THOSE of you who were present here, last Lord's Day evening, will remember that we followed Moses up to the mount, where he spent his first forty days receiving from God the ten commandments, the law, the claims of God upon man, written down on the tables of stone. And when Moses came down, you remember what was the condition of affairs below. All was ruin. Everything was hopeless.

The people who had put themselves upon the ground of responsibility before God, declared with the utmost folly possible, that they would do all that the Lord commanded them. The very first word of the law was, that they were not to make any graven image, and the first thing that meets the eye of Moses is a golden calf, and Israel dancing round about it, and saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel." The ruin was absolute. The breach was complete. The ordered relation between Israel and God was abso-

lutely broken by this open act of sin. I can quite understand how deeply Moses was affected when he brake the tables of stone. What must God have done if he had carried them down? He must have brought in immediate judgment upon the law-breakers. Moses met the difficulty in this way, so to speak, saying, If I do not carry them down, there will be an opportunity for God to bring out His resource, if there be any resource. God is holy, they are guilty, and if the law be bound on them He must judge them. So he brake the tables of stones, and God did not chide him for so doing.

Then he calls for any who are on the Lord's side to make it manifest. Levi responds, and three thousand men die. That is, the day the law was broken, modified judgment came in. The lesson is this, man cannot stand before God on the ground of a command. No, beloved friends, he must either be before God in the sense of His grace, and on the ground of His mercy, or else be condemned.

Next you see Moses turns to the people and charges their sin on them. In verses 11-13 he had been zealous for the people before God. Here he is zealous for God before the people, and says, "Ye have sinned a great sin" (xxxii. 30). It is a great thing to know that you have sinned. I have sinned; so have you. Their sin was idolatry. It was breaking the known commandment of God. For that sin, Scripture tells us, they got all their future punishment. There was the root that brought forth such bitter fruit in Israel's history in days to come, because idolatry was in the heart. Now I do not say that your sin and my sin have been exactly the same; but

you have sinned a great sin. What is it? That is not the point. I am not going to unfold what your sin is. But this I know, you are a sinner, and sin is a serious thing. Sin God will not pass over. He could not. If He did, He would not be God.

Cecil said once, that an unconverted man was half a beast, and half a devil. He resembles the beast in his lusts and passions, and he resembles the devil in his pride. It is a true statement. Take man as man, and you will find that is his history. Corruption and violence appear all through the scene. You may have a few exceptions. But, broadly speaking, man will follow his lusts and desires. He does not care for God. Then there is another thing, in which he resembles Satan. He finds the world a place in which he can get on, and when he gets up in it he is proud. The Word of God is perfectly plain, "All have sinned." And the man who has a deep sense before God of his sin, does not minimise it.

Now we think, that when sin comes out, then is the time for God to judge. Ah, that is man. But you see God is not like that. What comes out in this scene at Sinai is, that when everything was ruined and gone, and Israel's case absolutely hopeless, then it was that God retired into the blessedness of His own being, and the absolute goodness of His own nature. When grace had been abused, mercy came out, and God said I will be sovereign, I will do what I like, and I will bless them, spite of their sin.

Ah, dear friends, it is a wonderful thing to know God. You may ask, What do you mean by grace being abused? Well, what had it been but grace all the way till then? God drew near to Moses in the burning bush, and said to him, "I have surely seen

the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters : for I know their sorrows ; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey" (chap. iii. 7 and 8). Was not that grace? Pure, sovereign, blessed grace. You know how He led them from the burning bush right up to the last act which we have seen in the previous chapter. The manna came down day by day to them, and pure water followed them.

If you want to get God's ways in grace with them traced out, go and read the 105th Psalm. It is the record of all that He did. How He brought them out and blessed them. It is the tale of the unfailing goodness of God. He brings them to Mount Sinai, and then He says, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself" (Exod. xix. 4). Then He proposes the law; and in self-confidence, without really knowing what the claims of law were, they boastfully say to God, Whatever You want we will do. What is the next thing? The first moment they are really on the ground of obedience they fail, and all is over. Thereon Moses charges their sin upon them, "Ye have sinned a great sin." Do you not hear the Holy Ghost saying to you, "You have sinned a great sin"? The greatest sin you have committed is this, you have never believed the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are not a converted person you have never bowed to God's Son, and that is the greatest sin that any sinner can commit. And by-and-by, if you die in your sins, even though there may be ten thousand sins laid at your

door, the damning sin of all will be this, you have heard of Jesus, and yet never believed in Him. That is the great sin of every unconverted person in this hall to-night. And, if you feel it, all the better for you.

Then Moses says, "And now I will go up unto the Lord; *peradventure* I shall make an atonement for your sin" (ver. 30). Mark the word "*peradventure*." He is not sure that he can effect what he sees necessary, the making atonement for their sin. And you say to me, Is that all the comfort you have for me? By no means, listen. There is a Man gone up to God with no "*peradventure*" on His lips. There is a Man at God's right hand who was once on the cross, and who once bare the sins of sinners, went down into death under the judgment of God, and died with a thief on either side. But mark, He has risen from the dead and gone up to God, a victor. He has gone up as the One who *has made* atonement—gone up as the One who, in death, has met all the claims of God, and having finished the work which God gave Him to do, has taken His seat on the very throne, the judgment of which He bore at Calvary. Blessed Victim, glorious Victor!

Do you know the legacy He has left to you? Do you know what a legacy is? It is a gift that comes to you from a person that is dead. And I rejoice to tell you to-night that you have been left a wondrous legacy. What is it? When that Saviour died on Calvary's tree, do you know His last words? "It is finished." There is His legacy to every anxious, labouring soul, a finished work. Moses must say, "*Peradventure* I shall make an atonement for your sin." Not so the Lord Jesus Christ, whom I preach to you to-night. He has gone up with no "*perhaps*"

on His lips. Note what the Holy Ghost says of Him: Who "when he had *by himself purged our sins*, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. i. 3). It was when atonement was fully effected, when every claim of God had been met, when He had crushed Satan's power, and borne man's sins, that He annulled death, and, raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, that He went on high.

Resurrection is the evidence and witness of the satisfaction of God in that which Christ has accomplished, and if you see a living Christ at God's right hand, you will get peace in your soul. You will not get peace by only knowing that Jesus died. There is no dead Christ now. I take you to His grave. There is no buried Christ. Where is He? He is risen! "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" No, my friend, look up. I want you this evening to look up and see at God's right hand that blessed, adorable, holy Man, the Lord Jesus, God's only Son, who was once in death for us. Nothing is left for you or me to do, nothing except to appropriate and enjoy the benefit of the blessing that is connected with Him who died and rose. I was saying to you last Sunday evening that the law did not give life, power, or an object. What does the gospel do? It gives the believer in Jesus all three. It gives you life, eternal life, the gift of God, in Christ Jesus; it gives you power, because the moment you receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, the Holy Ghost falls on you, and you have power. And what is the next thing? You get an object for your heart in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. I repeat that is what the gospel brings you.

Last week we noticed that when Moses came down from the mount, after the first "forty days," and broke the tables of stone, his face must have flashed with righteous anger. When he came down the second time, we read that "Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone: and they were afraid to come nigh him" (chap. xxxiv. 29, 30). Why was his face shining? He had got a sense of what mercy was. It was the result of his discovery of the revelation of God's own blessed absolute goodness, taking now the shape of mercy to a people who were hopelessly lost.

When Moses went up, he said to God: "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin." He felt it almost impossible. He does not say, You will do it, because he did not know the heart of God well enough to say that. So he only says, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin: and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (ver. 32). In this instance Moses is like Christ. He is prepared to lose everything if only the people might be blessed. He was not called upon to do it, but there is where his love and the love of Christ came in. Jesus absolutely gave Himself up to God, and He gave Himself for our sins. The discovery that He has loved you and given Himself for you will bring blessing to your soul immediately.

God replies to Moses here: "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall

go before thee" (vers. 33, 34). When you come to the next chapter, God "spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (ver. 11). And you now find a most beautiful point in the history of this blessed servant. He is in the company of God, and at length Moses gets very bold as, filled with the sense of what Israel's sin is on the one hand, and equally with the sense of the goodness of God on the other, he says, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory" (ver. 18). The answer of the Lord is beautiful: "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee." If the glory of the Lord had then shone, Moses must have been withered up. Only in Him, who is God's Son, can that glory and majesty be revealed without man being overwhelmed. But He who Himself was God, left that glory, the glory which he had with the Father, came down here, became a man, and passed through this scene as the revealer of God. That perfect Man closed His life in death for the man who had no link with God. Then God "raised him up from the dead and gave him glory: that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Pet. i. 21). Get into His presence and see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

"I will make all *my goodness* pass before thee," is God's response to Moses' wish to see His glory, and then He lets out what I may call the secret thought of His heart, as He retires into the absoluteness of His being in goodness, in order to spare a guilty people. He, so to speak, says to Moses, The case is very bad, and if I let law have its way, I must cut the people off to a man. And then adds, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show

mercy on whom I will show mercy" (ver. 19). Had righteousness had its sway at the moment Israel must all have been cut off. But He says, Although they have abused my grace, and broken the law, there is one resource I have left—mercy. "I will show mercy," is divine prerogative, and divinely charming.

It is a wonderful thing when the soul has the sense of the mercy of God. In the words "I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy," He, so to speak, says, I will do what I like. I am absolute. Beloved friends, do not set your face against God. Do not oppose God. You leave God alone to exercise what I may call the prerogative of His love, and what will He do? "I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy," is His way of meeting the guiltiest sinner that ever trod the earth.

I will ask you to turn to Psalm cvi. for a moment. How wonderfully there does the truth of the mercy of God come out. Psalm cv. gives the detail of what God had been for Israel in grace. And then the next Psalm opens with "Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever" (ver. 1). Then the whole of that Psalm is occupied with showing what obdurate rebels Israel were. But why do they say, "His mercy endureth for ever." Because it says further on, "And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies" (ver. 45). It is mercy that God falls back on. And you will find in the next Psalm, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever" (Ps. cvii. 1). If you trace out Israel's history from first to last, the keynote of their song has ever been mercy, fruit most truly of the absolute, blessed

goodness of God. When the nation had utterly ruined themselves because of their sin, then it was God retired into the infinite goodness of His own Being, and mercy rejoiced against judgment.

How beautiful is it to hear, "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him" (Ps. ciii. 11). Do you want to know the measure of God's mercy? Try to measure the distance to heaven. You would have some difficulty to do that. You cannot measure it. And then the Psalm goes a little further, "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (ver. 17). That is what God is in His own being. He delights in it.

Do you remember the lovely expressions regarding mercy in the Gospels where the Lord speaks. It is a lovely theme for a troubled soul to dwell upon, and for all our souls to dwell upon. "And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." It is not whole folk that need a doctor, but people who are sick. Then He says, "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." There is the keynote to all God's ways. Did you think God wanted something from you to put things right? "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt. ix.

10-13). That again is what comes from God. Now go a little further. You find it comes out in the twelfth chapter, where He was blessing and healing on the Sabbath Day. "But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless" (ver. 7). Observe, they were condemning Him for blessing a man on the Sabbath Day. What is His answer? "But if ye had known what this meaneth, *I will have mercy*, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless."

That God delights in mercy has perpetual testimony in His Word; and a lovely instance of it is found in the Book of Micah. There you get the character of God, and the attitude of God towards a troubled people, beautifully expressed. Well may they exult in God's mercy and faithfulness, saying: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, *because he delighteth in mercy*. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Micah vii. 18-20). What a thrill of joy goes through the heart to find that a holy God so delights in mercy. And if you are here this evening a wretched, good-for-nothing, undone sinner, understand that the Lord delights to meet you, and He will gladly show you mercy, pardon all your sins, and give you the knowledge of His forgiveness.

Do not delay to taste His mercy. If you owed me

a ten-pound note, and you came to me and said that you were hard up and could not pay it, I might say, "Oh well, it can be paid later on." "But I shall never have it," you reply. "Then I shall just have to score off your debt," is my remark, and you go away and say, "He did not do it with very good grace." Well, that would be like me. But when God forgives a man his debt, his sins, He delights in it. He is rejoiced to meet a man trembling in his sins. His very nature thrills with joy in giving you the sense of His love, and He receives and blesses you on the ground of righteousness. God has immense joy in blessing a man like me, on the ground of what His own dear Son has effected. "I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy," reveals the depth of the goodness of God's heart.

Some people stumble at the sovereignty of God. They think His ways are arbitrary. I do not. Did not God say, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated"? (Rom. ix. 13). Yes, but God did not say it when the two lads were born. You find this statement in the last book of the Old Testament (Mal. i. 2, 3). He said it long after they were gone off the scene. With all his crookedness Jacob was a believer, and God loves faith, and always blesses the believer. But Esau was a real man of the world. He would sell his birthright for a mess of pottage—a little bit of enjoyment in this world. And what about his posterity. Why, they were always fighting against God and God's people. Israel were His people, and their very sin gave Him an occasion to show what He was in goodness. This is the next thing we read in Romans ix., "For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on

whom I will have compassion " (ver. 15). Do you not see, beloved friends, that God is sovereign? His sovereignty He retired into, in the scene before us, that He might exercise the most blessed attribute of His nature, mercy. Have you tasted it, man? He is rich in mercy. May you taste it this night, and go on your way and say, "I have tasted God's mercy." If God had dealt with Israel as they deserved, they would have been cut off to a man in their sin. Instead of that He had mercy on them. If God had dealt with you and me as we deserved, do you know what would have happened? I can speak for myself, and surely for you too. He would have cast us both headlong into hell for eternity. But He has saved me with an everlasting salvation, and I hope He has saved you. I have tasted His mercy. Have you? If not, may you taste it to-night. And mark, you need not be afraid of Him.

"I will make all my goodness pass before thee," said God to Moses. How has God made all His goodness pass before us? In the gift of His Son. Did you ever think God would give His Son for you? Did you ever think that His Son would come right down to Calvary's cross and go through sorrow, suffering, and death, in order to bring you to God on righteous ground? No. But He has done it. His goodness and His righteousness have been displayed in His Son. Remember that the wages of sin is death. But I know that He died for my sins. You say, I do not know whether He died for mine. I wish you would be like the old woman in the workhouse whom a friend of mine went to see. He said to her, "Come, tell me, my friend, are you quite sure you are forgiven and saved?" She replied, "Yes." "How do

you know that for certain?" continued her visitor. "Well, sir," she said, "I am no scholar, but it says in the Bible, Christ died for sinners, and I am quite sure I am a sinner, and therefore I am certain Christ died for me." That was a bit of heavenly logic. The syllogism was perfect. It had its major and minor premise, and its right conclusion. What was the major premise? "Christ died for sinners." And what the minor premise? "I'm a sinner." And what was the conclusion? "Christ died for me." Good. Well done, old lady in the workhouse. That is the way I got the assurance of salvation, and that is the way every soul has to get it.

What follows this revelation of God's mercy is intensely interesting, and I would commend the study of Exodus xxxiv. to each of you. Again God calls Moses up into the mount, "And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights" (ver. 28). For the second time, at the end of the forty days, God gives him the tables of stone. And what do you think Moses was doing during that second forty days? I believe that he downright enjoyed God. He enjoyed the Lord's company those forty days and forty nights, for "the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (vers. 5-7). He was in the enjoyment of His grace, as well as the deep sense of the mercy of the Lord. He had the sense that God would spare His people, guilty though they were. That was a wondrous forty days for Moses.

And when he came down, what was the effect? His face shone. And I tell you what will be the effect if you spend forty days with the Lord. Your face will shine. "The skin of his face shone" (ver. 30). It was like Stephen's in the Acts of the Apostles. There is always joy, peace, and blessing connected with the company of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Will you read at your leisure the third chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians? where we get the Spirit's comments on those instructive forty days. There it says, "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?" (vers. 7, 8). That "ministration of death" is the inevitable consequence of law, as such, and is connected with the first man's trial. It is in contrast with the ministration of the Spirit, which is a ministry of life and righteousness. That is all connected with Christ gone on high. The effect is liberty, not bondage, hence it can be said, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (ver. 18). You can draw near to God now on the ground of the death and resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the knowledge that the blood of Christ fits you to draw near to God. You can draw near with the happy sense there is nothing in the heart of God towards me but love, goodness, and grace, and your soul gets the sense, He meets my state, and loves to have me near Him.

We could not clear away one sin, but the blood of

God's Son has cleared every sin away. And we are brought to God with the discovery of the deep amount of mercy that is in His bosom. Well may we exclaim with the apostle Paul: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. xi. 33-36). He has acted for Himself, and worthy of Himself in connection with the death and resurrection of His own blessed Son, and He will by-and-by have His house filled with emancipated and profoundly happy souls, who can now call Him Father. He will have all His children there in the likeness of Christ, and He will have them there on the ground of sovereign mercy. Oh, my friend, if you have never turned to and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ till this night, may God give you to taste of His mercy now, for His name's sake.

CHAPTER V.
CALEB'S FORTY DAYS.

CANAAN AND THE WILDERNESS ; OR, UNBELIEF
AND ITS RESULTS.

(NUMBERS xiii., xiv.)

THERE are two striking New Testament scriptures which I shall read to you in connection with this very interesting moment in Israel's history, while going through the wilderness, because we there get the light of the Spirit of God upon that which they did, and the lessons we are to draw therefrom. First of all turn to 1st Corinthians, where the apostle, alluding to the history of Israel, says : " But with many of them God was not well pleased ; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now, these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted " (1 Cor. x. 5 and 6).

Observe, the things that happened to Israel were types of us. Now you must not gather from the reading of this scripture that a child of God is ever lost, or that a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ ever drops on the road ; *i.e.*, that he drops back from being a child of God to being again an unsaved soul. That is not the case, because " the gifts and calling of God

are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29). God brought Israel out of Egypt as a nation, and He carried them into Canaan as a nation. Now, I am addressing Christians. Some of you are undoubtedly Christians. But almost all of you are Christian in name. You go to church? Yes. And you profess Christ, and you very likely take the Lord's Supper; and therefore, dear friends, most of you I expect are Christians in name, but I fear that a good many of you are Christless Christians. "Well," you say, "that is a very curious expression." Be it so, but since you are a professing Christian, I ask you, Have you got Christ? That is the real question. I know to whom I am speaking. I am talking to people who bear the name of the Lord, and you will see presently how this is applied, when you look at the figure which I read to you to-night.

Now I will go to the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the Spirit of God gives another very striking comment on Israel's history, which I think we ought to lay to heart. "Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest). Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. iii. 7-12). Paul is addressing professing Christians. They were Jewish professors of the Lord Jesus Christ. And these words ought to have immense weight with any soul that has

professed the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He closes the chapter by saying, "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (ver. 19). They came out of Egypt. Did they go into the land? They did not. Caleb and Joshua got in. Why? Because they were men who really had faith in the Lord and in the truth of His word. Now then, says the apostle, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Heb. iv. 1).

People might say, What has this to do with the gospel? Notice what the apostle says next, "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them." You have had the gospel preached to you, perhaps once or twice this day. Whether you have believed it or received it, I do not know, but God knows. What is the gospel? It is the glad tidings that comes from the heart of God, of His desire to have you where He is, in His own blessed company. He would bring you into the rest and joy that He has on high. He calls you to that scene of endless joy, and He shows the way you can reach it, and how He can bring you into the spot where Christ now is. Like us, Israel heard the gospel. What was their gospel? I will speak of that in a minute or two. But observe first the Holy Spirit's statement, "But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (ver. 2).

Carefully notice this, my dear friends: to hear the gospel is not enough, I must believe it. And if I believe it, I know what I shall do. I shall join hands with Caleb and Joshua. I shall plainly say, "I will go on." If the word is mixed with faith, what will be the result? Present blessing, and eternal blessing.

But remember I have to go on, not stop on the road. I must start, continue, and finish in faith. It is in this epistle that we read, "The just shall *live* by faith." Now, that word of Habakkuk's (chap. ii. 4), which opens up the whole way of blessing, is quoted three times in the New Testament. It is in Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, but it does not mean the same in each case. There is no repetition in the Word of God. There are not two blades of grass in the field exactly alike, and there are no mere repetitions in the Word of God, and yet that statement is three times found in Paul's epistles.

In Romans, where it is a question of how a man can be justified before God, the apostle says, "The *just* shall live by faith" (chap. i. 17). That is the way you start. The emphatic word is "*just*" in Romans. When I come to Galatians, where they were in danger of turning back to the works of the law and forgetting that we are justified by the hearing of faith, he says, "The just shall live by *faith*" (chap. iii. 11). If you are going to be justified, it can only be by *faith*. That is the emphatic word in Galatians. But when I come to Hebrews, he says, "Now the just shall *live* by faith" (chap. x. 38). It is no good beginning and falling on the road. Hence there the emphatic word is "*live*."

Now I have read to-night the point where Israel turned back. Well, where did they start? I will show you, and also what led them to draw back. Because a man has started on the heavenly road, he has not got to the end of the pathway. I wonder what we shall say about you when your finish comes, and when you have passed away. If we stand over your grave shall we be able to say, "Thank God, we

have put in here the body of a downright, real, backbone Christian, who for many—perhaps forty—years has followed Christ simply and faithfully”? That is you have left such a testimony behind you that everybody is clear about it. Do you know what Caleb said? “I *wholly followed* the Lord my God” (Josh. xiv. 8). Oh, you say, he was conceited. No, no, he was consecrated, not conceited. Hear what the Lord says about him, “But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath *followed me fully*, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it” (Num. xiv. 24). Further, Moses says to him, “Thou hast *wholly followed* the Lord my God” (Josh. xiv. 9). And then his comrade Joshua writes that he “blessed him . . . because that he *wholly followed* the Lord God of Israel” (Josh. xiv. 14). My friend, if you get three witnesses like the Lord, Moses, and Joshua, to testify to your devotedness, you will do. But Caleb said it himself, for it was true. There are moments when a man can thus speak of himself before God. He had had forty years of probation, or testing, and got through them with God. He did not say it till he got into Canaan, and then he claimed the land which Moses promised to him, and he got it. (See Josh. xiv. 6-15.) May you and I walk in his footsteps.

Now I want you to go back in the history of Israel, because, here, in the chapters we have read, we have Israel presented to us in the wilderness, and in a short time they could have been in the land had they really been set for it. You know how they started; and I will take you over their history to show what God had done. There are two things in Scripture which we should carefully notice, viz., the purpose of God,

and the ways of God. What is the purpose of God? What He has determined; and if God has called you by His sovereign grace, I shall find you in glory by-and-by. And by the grace of God you will find me in glory too. But we shall both have to go on. We cannot fold our arms and settle down. We have to go on. Israel's history is a beacon light to warn us not to do as they did.

Now turn to another scripture and see what God's purpose in relation to them was. He is speaking to Moses in the burning bush. "And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows" (Exod. iii. 7). Similarly, troubled sinner, He knows your burden. The taskmaster has got hold of you, and you are wishing you could get away, but you find he is drawing the chains tighter round you. The devil brings all his power to hold you. He does not want you to escape to the Lord. But the Lord has seen all. He knows all about you, my friend. And now listen. "And I am come down *to deliver them* out of the hand of the Egyptians, and *to bring them up out* of that land *unto a good land* and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey" (ver. 8). That is the very word we read just now. Caleb and Joshua declared that to be the character of the land that they had travelled over for "forty days." There is nothing that wins sinners like the joy of the Christian, like the testimony of a person who has known the blessedness of God's salvation. Because I know it, I want you to know it. I know the blessedness and the sweetness of it too, and I have so much joy in the knowledge of the Lord myself, that I want you to share the goodness of His love. It

makes me desire that you might know and taste what the love of God has given me to know. I know I am a child of God, and I want you to know it. You get the knowledge of it by simple faith in God's blessed Son.

God's purpose then was to bring them *out* and to bring them *in*. Then He brought them over the Red Sea, and they had to go the journey through the wilderness. Their sad forty years' aimless wandering in the wilderness was no part of God's purpose. Wilderness exercises come in, in the ways of God, and the dealings of God with us, that we may learn ourselves on the one hand, and His grace and goodness on the other. The poor thief on the cross did not get a bit of the wilderness after his conversion. He was translated from the Saviour's side on earth to the Saviour's side in paradise that very same day. Now, it is not so with every soul. We have, most of us, after our conversion, a good long spell of the pathway here. I learn therein my own weakness and good-for-nothingness, and I also learn that God is good-for-everything. We learn the heart of God, the patience of God, and the grace of God in a wonderful way. But His purpose for Israel was to bring them out of Egypt and bring them into Canaan, for He had set His heart upon them. Little more than an eleven days' journey would have sufficed for this, had they been really set on going in. (See Deut. i. 2.)

Then He sent Moses to Pharaoh to get His people out, and if you will read the chapters that intervene from the third of Exodus onwards, you will see all the difficulties that Pharaoh put in the way. Pharaoh gives us the illustration of Satan's power. "I will not let them go," he boldly says. And do you think the devil is going to let you go? Not if he can help it.

You try and get away from him, and you will find he has a firm grip of you. You may tell me you do not believe in his power. Very likely not. But you try to get to heaven, you start for the Lord, you make up your mind to be His, and then you will find whether he has a firm hold of you or not.

"Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness," says God (Exod. v. 1). At first, "Neither will I let Israel go" (ver. 2) is Pharaoh's reply, and then he heaps burdens on the people. When at length God's judgments begin to move him, he says, "Go ye, sacrifice to your God *in the land*" (chap. viii. 25). Here Pharaoh begins to offer a series of compromises. The first is, "They may sacrifice *in the land*." What is that? Stop in the world and be a Christian. Make no mistake, you cannot be a worshipper in the world; you must get outside its boundaries morally to enjoy God. When the judgments of God began to fall yet heavier upon Pharaoh, he says, "I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go *very far away*" (ver. 28). This is compromise number two. You can be a Christian, he says, to an awakened soul, but do not be too earnest, or too decided. Moses' answer at this point is grand. "We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as he shall command us" (viii. 27). Well done, Moses! A three days' journey away from the world gives a young Christian a good start.

More judgments follow, and then the voice of God rings out again, "Let my people go, that they may serve me" (x. 3). What is the third compromise? "Who are they that shall go?" says the wily foe,

thinking thus, "I will let the parents go, but I will keep their children." But Moses said, "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go ; for we must hold a feast unto the Lord" (chap. x. 9). The whole family for God is Moses' fixed demand ; while Pharaoh says, "Go now, ye that are men." If Satan cannot prevent parents from being decided Christians, he will claim the children for the world—alas ! often far too successfully ! Parents, be on the alert.

When yet further pressed, Pharaoh says, "Go ye, serve the Lord ; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed : let your little ones also go with you" (ver. 24). That is to say : You may have the children, but leave me the business. To us it would suggest this :—You and your family may go to heaven, but meantime run your business on worldly lines. This is compromise number four. What does Moses say ? "Our cattle also shall go with us ; there shall not an hoof be left behind" (ver. 26). We are to be for God all round, family and business included, and it is well to notice that when they eventually go, Pharaoh cedes this part too, and says, "Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said" (Exod. xii. 32). The point is this, the devil is determined to contest every inch of ground, and to use any and every means to hinder the work of God in the soul.

If there be persons here in doubt and fear, thinking that Satan can eventually hinder their salvation, notice what the Lord next says to Moses. "And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage ; and I have remembered my covenant." And now you mark the seven

"I wills" which follow this. My troubled, anxious friend, if you get hold of these wonderful seven "I wills," your soul will enter into liberty and peace, and you will pass from "Doubting Castle" into "Salvation Square." Now listen. "Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and *I will bring you out* from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and *I will rid you out of their bondage*, and *I will redeem you* with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: and *I will take you to me* for a people, and *I will be to you a God*: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And *I will bring you in* unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and *I will give it you* for an heritage: I am the Lord" (chap. vi. 5-8). Look, these blessed promises begin with "I am the Lord," and close with "I am the Lord."

If our eventual salvation depended upon ourselves, there is not one of us that would reach the regions of heavenly glory, to which we are called. But since all depends on the Lord, the purpose of the Lord, and the grace of the Lord, your heart may be quite happy about the issue. What He has commenced, He will continue. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified," says St Paul (Rom. viii. 30), and then adds: "What shall we then say to these things? If *God be for us*, who can be against us?" (ver. 31). You get that in your soul, and you will find that you will pass into the liberty and the joy of the Lord's salvation.

Now notice *how* God brought Israel out. Before they came out of Egypt they were under the shelter

of the blood of the lamb. They were on redemption ground. You must get under the shelter of the blood. There is no salvation for you, my friend, apart from the blood of Christ, but, if under that blood, eternal salvation is an assured fact. Before God brought Israel out of the land of Egypt the lamb was slain, and the blood sprinkled on the lintel and two side posts of the door. There I get the striking figure of the death of Christ, the cross of Christ, where He, as the holy, sin-atoning Lamb, offered Himself without spot to God. He gave Himself a willing victim for the sins of His people, The type finds its perfect answer in Jesus. Of Him John the Baptist says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). Then, again, when He died, it says, "A bone of him shall not be broken" (John xix. 36)—a quotation from Exodus xii. 46. Again, "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. v. 7). And last of all the apostle Peter says, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). So that I find four witnesses, the Baptist, the evangelist John, and the apostles Paul and Peter, all telling me that Christ was the Antitype of this striking figure in Exodus xii.

Now if you see that, you will surely be anxious to learn what the figure means. In order to keep God's judgment out, I must have the blood of the Lamb between my guilty soul and Him. Each head of a house had to sprinkle it. It was not enough to have the lamb slain and the blood in the basin,

they must sprinkle it. What is the difference between the blood in the basin, and the blood on the lintel? Salvation, or the reverse. There is a person sitting in this hall to-night who knows that Christ died, and that the blood of Christ can atone for sins. Is that person saved? He is not. He knows the truth of redemption objectively, but he has not yet applied it to himself subjectively. This latter is absolutely necessary, and when it has taken place, should I ask, "Are you forgiven?" "Thank God I am," is the reply. "I know that Christ died for sinners, and that He died for *me*. I have believed in Him, and I have put the blood of the Lamb between my guilty soul and God, and God cannot forswear His word, 'And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you'" (Exod. xii. 13). That man has sprinkled the blood. What has the other man got? He has merely the knowledge that the blood is shed. That is the difference. He knows the fact that Christ has died and risen, but he has never made application of that glorious truth to his own soul, and therefore he has no real shelter from the judgment of God.

Now I ask, which case are you in? Understand this, friend, the blood shed brings no blessing, and no salvation is found where it is not sprinkled. When is the soul divinely blessed? When you are brought to know in simple faith, that Christ not only died, but that He died for you.

Well, God brought Israel out of Egypt and took them through the Red Sea. That is a striking type of Christ's death and resurrection. While God brought Israel through the Red Sea, all their foes followed. And what was the result? The next morning they

saw all their enemies dead upon the sea-shore. I know that Christ has risen from the dead; He has risen out of the scene of my death; He has taken away my sins in his death, and all of them are gone. The devil is a beaten foe, and the person who knows that is able to sing the beautiful redemption song of Exodus xv. Probably nearly two million souls sang that day—and then, delivered by God, they went on their Canaan-ward journey till they reached Kadesh-barnea, a spot really within sight of the land. Then, alas! unbelief came in, and they despised the pleasant land and lost it—save two faithful men, Joshua and Caleb.

The thirteenth of Numbers tells us how this came about. There we read, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel" (Num. xiii. 1, 2). Do you think God suggested that? Oh, no. He allowed, He did not suggest it. The Bible is a very wonderful Book. It does not give you everything in one passage. But if you will take the trouble to turn over your Bible till you come to Deuteronomy i., there you will see how Caleb's "forty days" came to pass. Moses is rehearsing the story of Israel's journeyings, after the forty years of wilderness wandering are over. He says: "And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the Lord our God commanded us: and we came to Kadesh-barnea. And I said unto you, *Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God doth give unto us.* Behold, the Lord thy God *hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it,*

as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee : fear not, neither be discouraged" (Deut. i. 19-21). At this point the dark cloud of unbelief appeared. Whether God was to be really relied on, was the question. "And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come" (Deut. i. 22). Whenever people begin to reason, it is not faith. Neither is caution faith. The suggestion looked prudent, but it was really unbelief. But Moses, beguiled by their unbelief, records : "And the saying pleased me well : and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe : and they turned and went up into the mountain, and came into the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out. And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which the Lord our God doth give us" (vers. 23-25). What are we to learn from this? That there is many a thing in our hearts that we would like, and God permits us to have *our own way*, and then we think we have a good reason for it. The end, however, is always sad. I do not know whether you ever noticed that when King Arad, the Canaanite, came out against Israel forty years later, he took "the way of the spies" (Num. xxi. 1). Their pathway told him how Israel would come. What seems like caution, is usually lack of faith in God, and leads to discomfiture. They did not believe the gospel. They had heard the lovely gospel, "I will bring them out, and I will bring them in," but they did not believe it, and desired to know if the land was as good as God said it was. Again

they heard a lovely gospel, from the lips of Caleb and Joshua, that ought to have rallied them, and set them forward, but it did not. The truth was, "They despised the pleasant land; they believed not his word, but murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord" (Ps. cvi. 24, 25). The Lord let them have their own way. "And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Ps. cvi. 15). Some one else has said, "We might write across the Book of Numbers this word, According to your faith, be it unto you." "We would rather die in the wilderness," say the people. God replies, "You shall die." "We can well go in," says Caleb. "You shall go in, Caleb," says God; and he did.

But look, the land is searched for forty days only to testify to the truth of God's word as regards it. It was unbelief really that sent out these spies. Do I need to search and see whether God be true? Certainly not. Have I any reason to doubt Him? Not at all. If He tells you He will pardon and forgive you where you are, should you have any doubt as to whether He means what He says? Not a bit. God had made promise to Israel. "We should like to be sure of it," they say, and out go the spies. It was rank unbelief.

Now see what the effect is. The spies go up, and what do they find? Fertility and beauty, truly a land flowing with milk and honey. Nobody touched them, and they picked a cluster of grapes which it took two men to carry. They brought also with them figs and pomegranates—the evidence and testimony of the land. Now, that is just what the gospel does. It tells me now of a heavenly Christ who forgives all my sins, and gives me pardon, peace, and joy. If you only *believe* God, you will get the same blessings. There is

many a person who can truly say, I have had the witness of the Spirit ; I have believed God ; I have taken Him at His word, and I have tasted that the Lord is gracious. I do not doubt that what the spies brought back is a figure of what the Spirit of God brings to us here, the love of the Lord, the grace of the Lord, and heavenly joys made good in our hearts as we pass through this scene.

For forty days these spies searched the land. That was a perfect testing of the land. Some of them bring back a good report, as they show the fruit of the land, saying, "We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey ; and this is the fruit of it" (Num. xiii. 27). What had God said ? I will bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey. We would like to be quite sure about it, says unbelief, and the spies are sent. Back come these men, and they say, "It floweth with milk and honey." Another scripture says it was a land which they did not need to water with the foot. Water abounded. The land of Egypt had to be watered with very hard toil (Deut. xi. 9-12). And it is hard work for sinners to make themselves happy without Christ. Whereas a simple Christian occupied with Christ is happy from 1st January to 31st December. That is what I have been, and I have been converted for forty-three years now. The first year was good, and the second was better, and the latest is better than all that went before. I am ever learning the love of the Lord, and how He can sustain, keep, and carry me on, filling me every day with the sense of His love. I tell you of a truth, God is worth believing, worth knowing, worth following. I hear a man saying, I would like a little pleasure. My dear sir, that will not do for me, I want

perennial pleasure. And do you get it? Yes, thank God, and I hope I look what I am, a saved man, down-right happy in the love of Christ, and I want you to know what I know.

Friend, you had better believe the gospel. I counsel you strongly not to put it off. Let me tell you this, the depths of hell and the lake of fire for eternity will give you no joy. If you die in your sins and unbelief, you will wake up there. You beware. Mark, God will judge sin and unreality whether in you or me. We all have to be tested.

The next thing in our story is, that Caleb says, "Let us go up at once, and possess the land; for we are well able to overcome it" (ver. 30). He is like an evangelist who commends the gospel by the joy that fills his own heart. But the next thing is that ten men assert, "We be not able to go up" (ver. 31). For one man who will commend Christ, I find ten men who will give you a reason for doubting. These men bring an evil report. Ah, if a man comes and tells you that you cannot appropriate Christ, he is like one of the ten evil spies. They slander the land, while Joshua and Caleb say, "The land which we passed through to search it, is an *exceeding good land*" (chap. xiv. 7). Yes, beloved friend, Christ is worth having. He is worth knowing and serving. If you want to have Christ as your own Saviour, you believe the gospel. They did not believe the gospel, alas, that day.

Their gospel, rung out by Caleb and Joshua, was very simple: "It is an exceeding good land." That was glad tidings, surely. But what was working in Israel's heart? Unbelief. Does it work in yours? Joshua says, "If the Lord delight in us, then he will

bring us into this land, and give it us: a land which floweth with milk and honey" (Num. xiv. 8). Unbelief ever says, "*We* be not able." My dear friend, don't think about yourself. Do you think you are able for anything? Not at all. What is not possible with man is possible with God. You could not be saved by anything of yourself. Impossible. How could you fit yourself for God? Again, impossible, but by the work of His Son, and the testimony of His Spirit, God opens up regions of glory which faith apprehends, and the heart then deeply enjoys. The whole twelve, observe, had to own that it was a land that flowed with milk and honey. Milk is most satisfying, there is nothing more sustaining than milk. And there is nothing sweeter than honey. And all you have to do is to appropriate and taste that which God presents to and presses on you.

Notice one word of Joshua's, "Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land" (xiv. 9). Do not mind the hindrances. There is a young man here who says, "I am afraid if I were to confess Christ to-night, I should fall and give all up to-morrow." Stay a moment, if you were to trust Christ, what would happen? He would save you to-night. Could He not keep you to-morrow? I never thought of that, say you, I will trust Him. The devil often puts the thought of falling to-morrow in the road to hinder you believing just now. Do not think of the difficulties, they are food for faith, as Joshua very strikingly says, "For they are bread for us" (xiv. 9). Faith delights in difficulties. Why? God will take me through them. But all the world is against me, you reply. Never mind. Do you know what was once said to Luther? "Luther, all

the world is against you." "God and I are a match for them," was his happy and simple answer; imitate him. The soul that trusts the Lord can say that in the same way. What about the giants and the high city walls if God was with them? Nothing. "If God be for us, who can be against us" (Rom. viii. 31).

You will not fall in the wilderness if you are like Caleb and Joshua. They believed, and could say of their foes, "Their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not" (xiv. 9). But, alas! the men did not believe, and perished in the wilderness. Then we have here another lovely prayer of Moses. Israel's unbelief led God to say to Moses, "I will disinherit them, and I will make of thee a greater nation, and mightier than they" (Num. xiv. 12). I do not want that, Lord, I do not want you to lose your character, is really Moses' reply. He knew that the Egyptians would hear it, and say, "Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness" (ver. 16). Look at the love he has for Israel on the one hand, and the care for God's character on the other. He says, Lord, I do not want to be made much of, but I do want something for others. "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word" (vers. 19 and 20). The mercy of God is a changeless deep, infinitely precious. "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (ver. 21). That is what is going to be by-and-by in the millennial reign of Christ. That is to say, the sin of

man never interferes with the purpose of God. If you are a real believer, you too will land in the glory where Christ is.

The end of this story is very very solemn. God says to Israel, I will let you have your own way, you would not believe me. You say, "Let us die in the wilderness," and you shall die. And "after the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise" (ver. 34). Caleb and Joshua went in, however. The real believers went in. That is the whole point. And now permit me to ask, Are you a downright real believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, I will meet you by-and-by in glory. Have you never made up your mind for Christ? If not, surely you will to-night. Could you ever get a better moment? To-night, where you sit, you may get God's blessing and God's salvation, and you may have in your soul the sense, I am Christ's and Christ is mine.

Listen not to these ten spies, nor their present-day representatives. See what their end is. "And the men which Moses sent to search the land, who returned and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord" (vers. 36, 37). God will always judge an evil testimony. But he who believes gets blessing. And if you have never really committed your soul to Christ, if you have never believed Him, do it to-night. There is no reason why you should not turn to the Lord and receive the Lord. You do not need to go very far to do it. I wish you would be like a man I met lately. He was a Christian.

"How long is it since you were converted?" said I.
"Twenty-three years ago, and it was through you."
"How did it come about? was it through the preaching?" "Oh, no. I was a farm servant in Perthshire, and one day while tending the cows in the byre the postman brought a letter to me, and inside the letter was a little book, called 'God says I'm saved.' Well, I read it, and when I came to the bit, 'I'm only a poor sinner, but Jesus died for me, and I believe in Him, and God says I'm saved, and so I know I am,' I said to myself, I know that I am saved too, and I have never had a doubt for three-and-twenty years." You just be as simple, and then you will be able to sing—

"O happy day, O happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away."

CHAPTER VI.

GOLIATH'S FORTY DAYS.

DESPAIR AND DELIVERANCE ; OR, THE CHALLENGE ACCEPTED.

(1 SAMUEL xvii., xviii. 1-4.)

IT is a wonderful moment in the soul's history when it really meets Christ, and knows Him as Deliverer and Saviour. There are three points in this striking scripture which I have read to-night. You get dismay, disdain, and deliverance. Now, dismay is what any man might feel as he looks at the condition of everything round about him, and inside him too. Disdain is the feeling the devil has towards you, for he knows his own power and your weakness. My friend, if you rightly understood the power of Satan, you would be far more dismayed than you are this minute. But I tell you what Satan thinks of you. He has the most profound disdain for you. Now I will tell you where blessing lies. In the knowledge of the One who is stronger than Satan—the great Deliverer, the Lord Jesus.

I admit this story of Goliath is but a figure, and I am not going to build a doctrine upon this picture, but it is one of those histories by which God brings before us that which illustrates the gospel in the most

lovely and charming way. The point is this, that when man cannot deliver himself, and when the power of the enemy is too great for man, that is the moment when God steps in to meet, in His grace, the weakest sinner that cares to taste that grace. Now I know that a good many of us here to-night are converted, and a good many are not. How do you know that? Oh, I have not been preaching for forty years without knowing that in a large meeting like this, among a good many Christians, there are always some that are not converted. There is one young man that I want to specially address this evening. You are not converted. May God convert you to-night. It is about time.

This scene before us is a picture of the effect of grace. Jonathan illustrates what I call a magnificent conversion, and a grand start. He illustrates a soul that wakes up to discover the personal beauty of Christ, and the love of His heart that brought Him into this scene, yea, into death, for our deliverance. When speaking of David to Saul his father, Jonathan says, "He did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine" (1 Sam. xix. 5). Jesus did more than that. He laid down His life to save me, and He has done it. Christ, the Son of God, has not only risked His life for you and me, but He has laid it down, everlasting praise to His blessed name!

And if you do not get into glory through the doorway of His death, you will never get in. You may by ten thousand roads go down to the dark dungeons of the damned through unbelief and carelessness. Your life is but a vapour, and it will be very soon gone. But there is only *one* way into God's presence for eternal blessing, and that is the doorway of death,

not my death, but the death of Him on whom death had no claim.

It strikes me that Jonathan was uncommonly glad when the end of the "forty days" of this scene came. I think forty days of anxiety was quite enough for Jonathan. I should be very glad to hear that you are anxious, for, depend upon it, sooner or later, you will slip into peace, and joy, and God's salvation. What through? The discovery that Christ has loved you. Now mark this, my unsaved friend, you have not loved Him. If you are an unconverted sinner, you may be as religious as you like, but if you have not been converted, if you have not been born again of the Spirit, if you have not been broken down with the sense of your sins, do not deceive yourself, you do not love God. Why? Because there is no love in the heart of a natural man to God. But if you find out that God loves you, the next thing will be, you will be able to love Him. Do not try to love Him. That is a great mistake. If you learn that God's love has taken the most wonderful way possible in the gift of His Son, and that the death of His Son has annulled death, closed the gates of hell for you, opened the door of heaven, and called you in, and embraced you, then you cannot help loving Him. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John iv. 19).

This effect I see in figure here. When this lovely story closes, what do we read? "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (chap. xviii. 1). And what then? He went into the stripping room. I wonder whether you have been in the stripping room yet? The moment you get converted, go into the stripping

room, take off everything, and bow at the feet of Jesus. I remember the night God took me into the stripping room ; I shall never forget it. Oh no, I shall never forget the night His blessed grace saved me over forty years ago. Do you keep your second birthday ?

But now look at the picture. The valley of Elah is very interesting. Curiously enough I had at my tea-table this evening a young Christian who passed through the valley of Elah three years ago. He described it as being now exactly what Scripture tells us here. High mountains on either side, and the deep valley in between. Notice how boldly the giant went down into the valley, and demanded somebody to meet him there. Just imagine this scene. The hosts of Israel are on the one side of the valley, and the Philistines on the other—picture, I do not doubt, of that which is in this world. Satan has his forces and hosts, plenty of them. Of course he has. And, moreover, he is the foe of God and man. Let me tell you, friend, that you cannot cope with him. This giant Goliath is only a figure of a solemn truth in your history and mine.

There they stand, the Philistines on one side, and the hosts of Israel on the other. Then out comes this champion. His height was six cubits and a span, "And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail ; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam ; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron ; and one bearing a shield went before him" (vers. 5-7). I can quite understand how nobody cared to tackle him.

"And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me" (ver. 8). That is the boldest challenge, I think, found in all the Bible. And what man could come? No man in Israel's army would come. Saul would not go out, and he was head and shoulders above the rest. And Jonathan would not go out. They were wise. "Choose you a man" was the word. But the chosen man was not there. Do you know where He came from? He came down from the Father's side. God's man was no mere child of Adam. What child of Adam could overcome Satan? What person in this hall is a match for Satan? Friend, you are not his match, make no mistake.

And now mark what follows. Goliath says, "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together" (ver. 10). He would fain have single combat. Who responds? No one. I read, "When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid" (ver. 11). There was the challenge. Who would pick up the glove, so to speak? There was no one. You tell me they were cowards. No, no. I call it not bravery to enter the lists when a man knows he must be defeated. It is folly. "Discretion is the better part of valour." If you know you cannot combat the foe, it is better to leave him to another who can. The Lord says: "What king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he

sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace" (Luke xiv. 31, 32). That is to say, the wise man will say, "I cannot meet this power."

I daresay you may say, I do not believe in Satan's power? Very likely you do not. Christian, let me ask you a question. Long ago you did not believe in his power? "Yes, that is true," say you, "but one day God woke me up to a sense of my sins, and then I also got the sense of what a grip the devil had of me." Sinner, you are in his power, with no sense of his grasp. Seek to escape and you will get your eyes opened. Satan does not put rough iron bracelets round the wrists of the sinner. They are there right enough, but he has put in a velvet lining so that you should not feel them.

Very likely, my young friend, you have now got the bit in your teeth, and are going your own way. You are on for a fling. Just so, and the devil will help you. He will give you every encouragement. Tell me, will he help you heavenward? No, my friend. I am well aware that you do not believe in him. But if you do not believe the gospel, and you do not believe in the power of Satan, you confirm the truth of Scripture. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils" (Luke xi. 21, 22). Who is the strong man? Satan. And who are his goods? Sinners. And what is his palace? The world. You are his goods. You do not see the label, but I see it. The label is burned in deep in your soul. He knows it, and God knows it. God knew it, hence He sent His Son to be a Deliverer.

There is such a thing nowadays as "hidden gospel."

What is that? Listen. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4). The god of this world is the devil. Do you know what would happen if the light of the gospel shone into your heart to-night? It would make a new man of you. I quite admit it has shone, but then you cannot see it, because you still have the shutters up, and the devil will assiduously help you to keep them up. Though you lived in a dark, damp cellar with no light, that does not prove there is no light. Take down the shutters and let the light in. A blind man says he does not see the sun. Does that prove that no sun shines? Oh, no. Your blindness and indifference to the gospel is the most cogent proof possible that the devil has blinded you. You are handcuffed, but insensible to the sad fact.

Now, I was just like you once. And what has brought me where I am? Grace, sovereign grace. I owe nothing to the devil, and we are no friends. He would break my neck if he could. But he will not do that till my work is done. Friend, as you hear of Christ, receive Him. You may never get another opportunity. The deceitfulness of sin, and the power of the world, are Satan's two great motors in getting sinners to go on as they are until it be too late. Tell me this, Is your heart happy? Oh, no. Mark, you have to meet God. Eternity is before you. You have been a sinner. Sin is lying on you, and the wages of sin lie before you. You cannot escape death. I will live as long as I can, you say. I know that. But if I were to tell you that you would certainly die before

six in the morning, how would you like that? Death is the wages of sin, and you cannot escape it save by the intervention of the Lord Jesus Christ. How cheering are the tidings that God has stepped in and given His blessed Son to die for the sins of sinners.

But look at our picture again. I read, "When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid" (ver. 11). I think they were afraid and dismayed because they felt it was impossible for them to cope with such a foe. At this moment we get David brought on the scene. It is striking that while this man was issuing his challenge, we read, "Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehemjudah, whose name was Jesse; and he had eight sons; and the man went among men for an old man in the days of Saul. And the three eldest sons of Jesse went and followed Saul to the battle, . . . but David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Beth-lehem. And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days" (vers. 12-16). At this moment, while the giant is clamouring for a man, God introduces His man. And who is he? David, a beautiful type of the One who is David's Son.

Presently we read that Jesse the father sends his youngest son, but not till the "forty days" had rolled by. I can well understand the feelings of those men, Saul and all, as this giant came out the first morning and evening, saying, "Give me a man." They look round for the man, but he was not there. Then the second day, "Give me a man," again rings in their ears, and the same thing goes on for forty long days. Perfect testing and manifestation of the weakness and utter incompetency of the hosts of Israel take place.

They are dismayed and in a condition of deep anxiety. No deliverer appears till they have a true and deep sense of their feebleness. Then is the moment for God to interfere. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. v. 6). Yes, it is just then that the gospel comes out.

"And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren. . . . And look how thy brethren fare" (vers. 17, 18). You have here in figure that which is so beautifully stated by the apostle John. "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John iv. 14). When did the Lord Jesus Christ come into this world? Not until it was manifestly proved that man could not save himself. It was after four thousand years of the sin, folly, and evil of man, that in due time Christ came. Who suggested to God to send His blessed Son? Nobody. It was His own thought. Ah, my friend, the gospel is a wonderful thing. No writer of fiction ever produced, or could produce, a tale anything like the greatness, the grandeur, and the wondrousness of the story of the gospel. Who would have thought that God would give His Son to death for a world that had sinned? Certainly not you or I.

So long as I was unconverted the very name of God was always obnoxious to me. I knew He was holy, and I was unholy; I knew He had claims upon me and I could not meet them. And the natural mind is enmity against God. Sin has put us at a distance from God. It has broken the link between man and God. There is guilt on the conscience, sins

and defilement on the soul, and the sense that we are not fit for God. There is a drawing back from God, and then there is an interpreting of the heart of God by the thoughts of our own hearts. People in sin think God does not love them. It is an immense mistake. He loves the sinner, while He hates his sins. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). And what is the world? It is made up of people who do not love God. What, then, is the real Church made up of? People who love God.

It is a wonderful thing when a man learns that God loves him. A poor old man learned this by a tract the other day. A friend of mine sent a gospel booklet to a Christian lady. She thought it would suit this old man, and posted it on to him. There happened to be pasted on the outside of the booklet a notice of some tent meetings, containing also that verse, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." She tried to get the bill off, but she could not succeed without spoiling the little tract, so she left it on and sent it to the man.

Some time after she met him, and asked him if he was saved. "Yes," said he, "but what was in the book did not touch me, it was the text on the bill at the bottom of the book." "And what was the text?" "It was that one which says, 'God so loved the world,' and I seed for the first time in my life that I be of it, and He do love me therefore. I read also, 'That he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,'

and I seed that I be one of they, for I do believe in Him." Dear old man, he got the gospel very simply. That is the way you must get it, dear friend. God has loved the world and has given His Son for it.

Get hold of the wondrous fact that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. That blessed Son of the Father came into this world to make God known, and as you follow Him through His life, wherever you trace Him you see God. See Him drying the eyes of the widow who has lost her only son, and raising him from the dead (Luke vii. 11-15). It is God. See Him going at the behest of an anxious father, when He raises Jairus' little lassie from the dead. He was God manifest in the flesh. Follow Him to the fourth of John, where He meets a poor woman all alone. Her sin had made her solitary. There is nothing like sin to drive men into solitude. It often makes a man withdraw from his friends and everybody else. He wants to be alone. And that is where she was. Jesus gets her confidence as He said, "Give me to drink," and all to win her soul. When she says at length, "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things," He replies, "I that speak unto thee am he" (vers. 25, 26). God was manifest in the flesh. You will never know God apart from Jesus, but if you see Jesus, the Son of the Father, you will get the knowledge of His grace.

Let us now observe David as he comes to Israel's camp. We will follow and see what happens. He notices the state of misery and despair on every hand. And now once more the giant comes and renews his challenge, and David not only hears, but he sees.

He heard him, but he saw something else. "And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid" (ver. 24). They had universally the sense, we cannot meet him.

And now, my dear friend, have you the sense that you cannot meet Satan? He has overcome every man but One, the Man who, in lowly grace, had come uncalled and unwanted into this scene. Jesus met him in the wilderness first of all, and refusing his temptations, morally overcame him; then He met him in the garden of Gethsemane, and again was the victor; then on the cross He bore Satan's attack and conquered, going by the pathway of death right down into his stronghold that "through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii. 14, 15).

Arrived on the scene of conflict, David makes a few inquiries, which bring his brethren to the front. "And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David." Do you know who Eliab is? He is the type of the self-righteous sinner that has come into this hall, and who does not want a Saviour. You say, I do not believe that I am lost. You will not be saved then. See what Eliab says here. "Why camest thou down hither? And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle" (ver. 28). I think that is very fine. "To see the battle." There was no battle to see. So also is it with you and Satan to-day. You need a

Deliverer as Israel did. You are nothing but a weak, polluted sinner, only fit for hell, and that is where you will spend eternity if you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is very strong language, you say. Yes, strong but true nevertheless. A lady said to me to-day, "Doctor, you do not seem to be mealy-mouthed as to eternal things." No, I am not. Hell is hell, and heaven is heaven. I have escaped the one and know the joy of the other, so I want you to get on the road to heaven if I can persuade you to take that step.

But you say, Why did the Son of God come down here? He came down to save men, and, thank God, He has saved me. He came down to wash away all my sins, and He has done it. He came to fill my heart with joy and gladness, and He has done it. What He has done for me, let Him do for you. I think David's answer to Eliab here is beautiful. "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" (ver. 29). Friend, listen! From the glory to-night the Saviour says to thee, "Is there not a cause?" Indeed there is, for if Christ do not intervene there is no salvation for any. The cause was manifest; the foe was too strong for us. Love brought Him down, I admit. And then upon the cross sin was laid on Him, and He bore sins that He might blot them out, and deliver and bring to God every one that trusts Him. Could Israel meet their enemy? They could not. Can you meet Satan's power? You cannot, and further, you are unfit to meet God. If you die in your sins, you will be buried in them, and you will be raised in them, and you will pass to the Great White Throne in them, and from thence you will pass into the lake of fire in them. Mark this, the man that does not

part company with his sins in time will not part with them in eternity.

“ There is no pardon in the tomb,
And brief is mercy's day.”

My friend, wonderful indeed are the causes that induced the Saviour to come down.

Now, notice the way David wrought deliverance for Israel. He gathered from the brook five smooth stones. What good could they be against such a giant? I think when Saul saw him do that, he regarded it as folly. And do you know what some people in our day have said? “ The story of the cross I cannot accept. I do not believe that I can be saved by the dying agonies and the atoning sufferings of a Man upon that tree. It seems folly to me.” Such speakers have been already pointed out, for the apostle Paul says, “ The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness ; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God ” (1 Cor. i. 18). I know that I seem to some of you in this day of incredulity and infidelity to be indeed foolish, but I am quite prepared to be counted a fool for Christ's sake. But please observe that what you count “ foolishness ” is “ salvation ” to me. Is not that strange? Who is the wise man to-day, the man of faith, or the sceptic? The man of faith, for the preaching of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. i. 16 ; 1 Cor. i. 21). That is the meaning of the five smooth stones ; what looked the essence of feebleness was the power of God.

The giant curses David, and treats him with disdain. The latter goes out with only stone and sling, and what happens? He slings that stone, and it enters the giant's forehead. All thought it was impossible. Yes ; but

the fact is this, what is impossible with man is possible with God. That which seems weakness with man is power with God. What could be weaker than a strippling and a stone? I can tell you of something weaker. A babe lying in a manger. I read, "And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke ii. 12). There are two signs God gives us in Scripture. A babe lying in a manger. That was the sign given to the shepherds. But there is yet another deeper sign of weakness. Do you know what it is? A dead man. The Lord Jesus said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish (R.V.), so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. xii. 39, 40). The expression of absolute weakness is a man in death. Do you know how I am saved? Through a Man in death. He was rejected by everybody, betrayed by a false friend, and denied by a true one, forsaken by everybody, and at length forsaken by God, and on the cross "crucified through weakness" (2 Cor. xiii. 4). But that cross is God's power unto salvation. There is nothing will meet and deliver man but the cross. It is God's way of meeting man where he is, a sinner in his sins. "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. i. 25).

When the giant falls, what is the next thing? "David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith" (ver. 51). I think Jonathan took a good long breath when he

saw the giant's head come off. I see five points in Jonathan's history. When David came into the camp he was *trembling*, he was miserable. When he saw David go forth, for he had heard what David had said, he was *hopeful*. I hope he will conquer him, said he; and you say, I hope Christ has met my case. When the giant's head came off, he could well say, Thank God it is all done, I am clear of that enemy now. He was *delivered*. Next he was *enriched*, and lastly he became *devoted*.

It is a great thing to see that by Christ's death on the cross the power of Satan was broken. To put Christ on that cross was the most foolish thing the devil ever did. He got Judas to sell Him for thirty pieces of silver. (Do not you spend eternity in hell with Judas.) And he got Herod to taunt Him, and then he got Pilate to condemn Him. (I should not like to spend eternity with Judas, Pilate, and Herod. My mind is made up. I am going to spend eternity with Jesus. You do the same. That is my advice.) Then the Romans nailed Him to a tree, and the devil said, I have got rid of Him now. What a profound mistake. He did not know that by His death He was going to meet the claims of God on man, and take up the whole question of man's sin in His death, and, blessed be His name, He did it. And what is the next thing? A risen Saviour, an empty tomb, and then a rolled-away stone. The stone was not rolled away to let the Saviour out. No, no; but to let you and me look in, and see the proofs of His victory over death and Satan. Thereafter the Lord went up on high triumphant.

What must Satan have then said? The most

foolish thing I ever did was to put that Man on the cross. His death has saved millions. If you are wise you will say, By the grace of God I will have Him to-night as my own. You may well have Him, boast in Him, and yield all to Him, for He is worthy.

We have already seen that David cut off the giant's head with his own sword. What does that teach us? Do you know the sword that Satan holds over a sinner's head? Death. He says to you when you are young, "There is plenty of time." When you are middle-aged he will say, "You must work hard and make money now." When you are old he will say to you: "You have missed your opportunity of salvation. It is too late." Then he will hold over your head the solemn fact that you have been a sinner, and that the wages of sin is death. His witness is quite true, but he will not tell you the gospel. If you are wise you will, where you are, get hold of this, that a Man, on whom death had no claim, has gone into death, that He has come up out of the grave, triumphant over Satan, and that He has left unsettled no question as to the sins of those who trust in Him. There was no sin on Him when He went on the cross. Then "the sins of many" were laid on Him while on the cross, but there was no sin on Him when He came down from the cross. There He atoned for and put them all away, and as a consequence He has gone into death and annulled it. Did you ever ponder this verse? "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. ii. 14). Do you know why you and I die? Because we are the children of a fallen man. Do

you know why Christ became a Man? That He might die. Death had no claim on Him, for "he did no sin" (1 Pet. ii. 22). He "knew no sin" (2 Cor. v. 21), and "in him is no sin" (1 John iii. 5). As to this, testimony is abundant from every side, divine, satanic, and human. God searched Him and found "*nothing*" in Him (Ps. xvii. 3). He Himself said, "The prince of this world (Satan) cometh, and hath *nothing* in me" (John xiv. 30). Then the dying thief said, "This Man hath done *nothing* amiss" (Luke xxiii. 41). He was absolutely perfect.

Having met Satan in the stronghold of death—the very citadel of the king of terrors—He has annulled his power and risen from the dead. I think I can understand now why He says to John, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. i. 18). He, so to speak, says to John, "I have been down exactly where you were, I have gone into the death you ought to have died, I have met the one who had the power of death in my passage through death, I have plucked the keys from his girdle, and wrenched the sceptre from his hand; he is a defeated foe, and I am a risen, victorious Saviour." That is the One I know.

I repeat that I believe Jonathan drew a good long breath when he saw the giant's head roll off, and the sense of deliverance entered his bosom. Nor am I at all surprised to read, "And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted" (ver. 52). I sometimes wonder how people when they hear and get hold of God's delivering gospel do not shout, "Hallelujah, I am saved to-night." I should rejoice to hear you say it. You get the enjoyed sense of the deliverance of

Christ, and it will mightily move you. The fact is, that people are very proper nowadays, and are little moved by the gospel. They forget that a great many are going into hell with the utmost propriety. They will be terribly moved when they stand before the great white throne. The men of Israel and Judah were moved. They spoiled the tents of the Philistines, and they were enriched. Among them Jonathan was enriched. At first anxious, then hopeful, then delivered, now he is enriched, and in the next chapter we notice that he becomes devoted to David, and surrenders all to him.

David comes back to the camp with the giant's sword in one hand, and his head in the other. And now I read, "And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (chap. xviii. 1). Yes, he sees, and owns his deliverer. And, my dear friend, when you see the beauty of Jesus, the grace of Jesus, and the value of the blood of Jesus, if you see that by His death He has delivered you and saved you from Satan's power, and that in His clearance of death and judgment the Christian now stands in association with Him, your heart will be captivated. He said to His own, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19). He said to Mary, after He was risen from the dead, "Go to *my brethren*, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John xx. 17). He associates us with Himself in life, favour, and relationship before God. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. i. 7), is the Spirit's record. I do not

wonder that Jonathan's heart was captivated by David, and I hope yours too is won for Jesus fully.

The next thing we read is this, "And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle" (xviii. 4). I think it produced great consternation that day, when the heir to Israel's throne was seen to step out to this simple shepherd lad, take off his royal garments and give them, with his weapons, to David. There is the most perfect surrender. He says, "My heart is yours, David, and my all is yours."

My friend, tell me, do you know anything like that in your soul's history? Surrender your all to Christ. It is easily done when a man's heart has been captured. Friend, I do not want your head or your money, but I want your heart, and your heart for Christ. He wants your heart. Do you not feel inclined to yield your heart to Christ to-night? Imitate Jonathan. It was a fine start he made. May you be *devoted* to Jesus from this night forth.

CHAPTER VII.

ELIJAH'S FORTY DAYS.

DEJECTION AND SUPPORT ; OR, A FAILING SERVANT, AND A FAITHFUL MASTER.

(1 KINGS xvii.-xix.)

THE history of Elijah the Tishbite is exceedingly interesting ; and there are, in the details that God gives us of this remarkable man, some very precious and blessed lessons for all of us, if we are only willing to learn. Saints, sinners, and servants may each learn from what God has told us of him.

The passage that I have read gives the moment when he comes out first of all in public. But there had been a preparation in Elijah's soul long before this. That we discover in the New Testament. Had we not the testimony of the New Testament Scripture we might not have known that, save from the fact that God always prepares His servants before He uses them. Let me say in passing, what a wonderful thing it is to be God's servant. It is a wonderful thing to be God's man in a world like this. I grant you things were in an awful state in Elijah's day. Idolatry was rampant in Israel, " And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him " (1 Kings xvi. 30).

There never had been such a moment of declension and departure from the truth as the moment when Elijah comes in view, and it is then that the widow of Zarephath says, "Now by this I know that thou art *a man of God*" (chap. xvii. 24). It is a fine thing when the widows round about you recognise you as a man of God. I think to be God's man in the devil's world is an unspeakable privilege. Fellow-Christian, you may be that, and I may be that, through grace. I find the same term used in the New Testament regarding Timothy: "But thou, *O man of God*, flee these things" (1 Tim. vi. 11). And again, in view of any who are really such: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that *the man of God* may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17). God is always looking out to have men for Himself in this world. It is an immense thing for you or me to be able to say, By grace I desire above all things to be a man of God; I desire to be on the Lord's side; and, in a world where Satan rules, to be for God. Do not forget that Satan is the god of this world. It is a great thing for you to be a man of God here. This widow knew by his ways that Elijah was a man of God.

The New Testament tells us precisely what had taken place prior to the moment of Elijah's public appearance. "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he *prayed earnestly* that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (Jas. v. 17). That man knew God, and had gone to him *earnestly* in prayer. He realised the awful state of Israel. He

saw how the Lord had been dishonoured ; His temple slighted, and His worship set aside ; for later on he says, "The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword" (xix. 10). This is what the apostle Paul calls his intercession against Israel.

Nothing could be worse than the state of Israel in that day. A person who was not really in nearness to God, and in the sense of His power, which alone could meet so serious a state of affairs, would have given all up as hopeless. But what is so exceedingly charming to learn is this, that before this man appears in public, he has been alone with God. If we are going to have much blessing, there will have to be more prayer. The men who have been really used of God, the mighty men in the field, have been always mighty men in the closet. They have been men of prayer. I find that Elijah prayed "earnestly." He was a wonderful man, but he was "a man subject to like passions as we are." He was exactly like you and me. What does he do ? He goes to God in prayer, feeling that the only way in which Israel's declension could be arrested was by the intervention of God's hand. Then in answer to his prayer God in His sovereignty is pleased to shut up the heavens for three years and a half. You know what terrible effects a drought of that nature would produce.

At this point Elijah comes out from God, appears on the scene, and says to Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (xvii. 1). Observe the expression, "The God before whom I stand." Now, I ask you, and I ask myself, Is that true of you and me ? Of course I do not think

an unconverted person can say, Yes. But it is a very serious question. If you do not stand before Him as your Lord and Master now, the day is coming when you will have to stand before Him as your Lord and Judge. Elijah, so to speak, says : " I am in touch with God. I am here for God, and I have a message to you from God, and it is a very sorrowful one."

That was Elijah's message that day. But, my friend, I have not to tell you of dearth and drought. No, no. If you are an unsaved sinner, I have sweet news for you. The Lord before whom I stand is a living, loving Saviour-God, and what He wants is that your heart should be acquainted with Him. He wants you to receive His Son, and to know His grace, and if you are wise you will make up your mind for the Lord to-night. To know God is unspeakable joy. Many a young man thinks that to be a Christian would be a dull thing. You never made a greater mistake in your life. " Oh ! " you say, " I have seen some Christians, and they are dull enough." Well, you have not seen the right kind. The man that really knows Christ has his soul filled with peace and joy from week's end to week's end. He is saved, he is pardoned, he is a joint-heir with Christ, he knows his sins are forgiven, he has the Holy Ghost dwelling in him, Christ is his Saviour, and God is his Father, and he is on his way to everlasting glory. Can that be said of you ?

No sooner has Elijah given his message than the Lord says, " Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan " (ver. 3). Again he must go into private. The servant must be hidden while his Master cares for him. " And it shall be that thou shalt drink of the brook ; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there "

(ver. 4). Very probably that was not exactly what Elijah looked for. Perhaps he thought God would bring him into prominence. But instead, he goes away for three and a half years into private life. He has the brook to drink from, and the ravens, of all birds, to feed him. Perhaps you do not believe the tale. I do. The raven is the last bird under the sun to give up a nice piece of flesh, but "I have commanded" lets us into the secret of this remarkable bird-ministry. God was there. That is the whole point.

But by-and-by the brook dries up. That too was part of the ways of God with His servant, and "Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee" (ver. 9) is the next word. When God commands, all a servant has to do is to obey. Without a single word, away goes Elijah to this widow woman. He finds the widow gathering some sticks. There is nothing left in her house but a barrel of meal and a cruse of oil. And she says, "And, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die" (ver. 12). Elijah says, "Fear not; go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son," and then adds this sweet word, "For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth" (vers. 13, 14). What light and joy came to that woman's house. It is a great thing to care for the servants of God. She did it, "and she and he and her house did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word

of the Lord, which he spoke by Elijah" (vers. 15, 16). God sustained them. God can do anything. That is the great point, and that is the lesson which faith learns in a scene like this.

After a while the widow's son dies. God would teach her, as well as His prophet, that He was the God of resurrection. When he died she said to Elijah, "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" (ver. 18). Yes, there was something that God had to settle with her. And perhaps God has some sin to bring to your remembrance. While things are outwardly smooth you can go on, but by-and-by when death comes in, and you lose your boy, or husband, or father, or mother it may be, what comes up? There is some long-forgotten sin that comes up upon the conscience. That is oft-times the way God puts His finger on the souls of men.

Then Elijah turns to the Lord in prayer, and the child is raised; and he learns, and the widow, too, that God is the God of resurrection. Now that is exactly where the gospel comes in. I have to tell you of the God of resurrection. He has given His Son in blessed grace, for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," even to death. But God has raised Him from the dead, and the gospel now proclaimed is in connection with a risen Christ. It was the God of resurrection that Elijah knew, and it is the God of resurrection that you are called to know now. The Son of God has come into this world, gone right down into death, and God has raised Him from the dead. God now calls you to know a loving, living Saviour, so that you should have Him as your Lord and Master. It is the One who is

risen from the dead. You are to know Christ in resurrection. He is on the other side of death, and He has power over death. It is a wonderful thing, in a world of death, to know One who lives, and who has power over death.

That widow would never forget all the days of her life how God stepped in. God had brought life in again, and she knew Him as the God of resurrection. And it is a great thing to touch resurrection. You and I pass through a world where death reigns on every hand, and it is a wonderful thing to get into an atmosphere of resurrection, and that is where the gospel brings us. Such was the lesson that widow learnt, and thereby, also, Elijah was fitted for fresh work.

The next thing is, God says to him, "Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth" (chap. xviii. 1). Thus commissioned of God, Elijah goes out to seek Ahab. The moment is come when the rights of God, the authority of God, and the claims of God, are to be asserted upon a backsliding people. Before Elijah meets Ahab he crosses Obadiah's path. Elijah was a bold man, and Obadiah was not. Was Obadiah a saint? I think he was. But he was a man who had never fully hoisted his colours. In the bottom of his heart he believed in Jehovah, but he kept it quiet. People often say to me, "I do not make any profession." Why? I do not think they have much to profess. If you had your heart full of Christ you may depend upon it it would come out. You could not keep it in. You have the privilege of standing for the Lord in a day of declension, but the question is, Are you a secret disciple? Obadiah was a secret disciple. He did not come out boldly

like Elijah. Their meeting, however, was very touching.

Ahab had said to Obadiah, "Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks, peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts" (ver. 5). Ahab did not care whether the people got food. He wanted grass for the horses. He was a downright selfish man, hence Elijah says to him presently, "Get thee up, eat and drink." His only thought was the things of this life. "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die" (1 Cor. xv. 32), is really the worldling's motto. That is the life of most men. On his way through the land Obadiah meets Elijah. Obadiah ought long ago to have been in Elijah's company. If there had been purpose of heart on Obadiah's part he would have come boldly out with God's servant. I am rather afraid there are a great many Obadiah's nowadays. Oh, friend, if you love Christ, do not be afraid to confess Him.

When they do meet, Obadiah says to Elijah, "Art thou that *my lord* Elijah?" Elijah coldly replies, "Go, tell *thy lord*, behold, Elijah is here" (vers. 7, 8). He says, You go back to your lord. You have never sided with me. There is unmistakably a reserve, a coolness on Elijah's part. Was he right or wrong? Well, beloved friends, grace is a wonderful thing; but Elijah had the sense, that Obadiah ought to have come out boldly before now. Obadiah says, "Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid an hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water" (ver. 13). Yes, that was all very well, but why had not he come out boldly? Ah, fellow-

Christians, I think some of us will be sorry by-and-by that we have not been more out-and-out for the Lord than we have been. Let us beware!

Obadiah goes and tells Ahab, and Ahab comes to meet Elijah. "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" (ver. 17). If a man comes out boldly and thoroughly for the Lord, if he stands for the truth, what may he expect? Everybody will be against him. It was so in the church at Pergamos. Antipas came boldly out, and it cost him his life. It was like to cost Elijah his life, as you will see presently. When a man takes a bold stand for the truth he is usually hated. Thank God for the men that maintain the standard of truth in an evil day—for such as have the truth, and are not afraid to own and preach it, no matter what anybody thinks about them. Elijah had here the sense, I have now the opportunity of standing for God. Ahab says to him, "You are troubling Israel." Then Elijah says to him, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim" (ver. 18). The eight hundred and fifty prophets were witnesses of the truth of this charge.

Then Elijah says, "Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table" (ver. 19). You may depend upon it, if there had not been anything to eat they would not have gone to Jezebel. She stands out as the spirit of that which always persecutes the witnesses of God. They did not eat at Ahab's table. It was at Jezebel's table.

And now we come to the point where they have to choose between the man of God and the men of Baal—between God and Baal. And you will have to take your stand either for God or against Him. The God of resurrection, the God that gave an only Son to be the Saviour of the world, is not welcomed by it. The world has refused and rejected the Son of God, nay, more, it has forgotten Him. Now the point is this: Where does your heart stand in relation to Christ. Can you say that Christ is yours, and you are Christ's, and that you are on the side of the One whom the world has refused? Satan will bring in anything to keep people away from the truth of God. Everything that is in this world he introduces just to put a barrier between your soul and God if possible.

Ahab summons the prophets unto Mount Carmel. Elijah's object here is very distinct. He stands for God, and wants the people's hearts for God. He wants Jehovah to be known, and His name to be believed. Is Jehovah God, or is Baal God? is the serious question. That was the great point to be settled. Look at that man standing there all alone, while eight hundred and fifty haters of the truth surround Ahab. It is a grand thing to stand for God whoever and wherever you be. Mind that, young man, if you are afraid to confess Christ.

"And Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word" (ver. 21). Things are brought to a point. And now, my friends, if Christ is not worth having, say so. If He is worth having and following, then fling in your lot with Him. How

long halt ye? "Well," you say, "I am not in a hurry," God knows that, and the devil knows that too. And he will not let you be in a hurry if he can help it. But oh, if you have never been brought to the point before, may you be able to say to-night, "Christ for me." If you come to Him where you are in your guilt, what will He do? Bless you, cleanse you, clear you of all your sins, bring you from darkness to light, from distance to nearness, yea, bring you to God. But the point is this, there must be decision. The great want of the moment I believe is decision. Young men and young women especially need to be decided. To such would I say in all affection, If you do not decide for the Lord now, you will very soon find you have gone under the wheels of Baalim's car. If you do not turn to the Lord before you are twenty, you have but an ever-lessening chance after. You would find if you went through this audience to-night that over fifty per cent. of the Christians present were brought to the Lord before they were twenty. And can nobody be saved after they are twenty? I do not say that, but the probability of conversion diminishes very rapidly as age creeps on. Some reliable statistics on this point once fell into my hands, and I give them to you. It was found that of 1,000 Christians the age when converted was as follows:—

Under 20 years of age,	-	-	-	-	548
Between 20 and 30 years of age,	-	-	-	-	337
„ 30 and 40	„	„	-	-	86
„ 40 and 50	„	„	-	-	15
„ 50 and 60	„	„	-	-	13
„ 60 and 70	„	„	-	-	1

Look well at that table. Is there no hope for the aged? You old, hoary-headed man, thank God there

is hope. I do not say there is no chance. But I have seen very few grey-haired men and women saved.

Come on, you young people, and decide for the Lord. Make up your mind for the Lord to-night. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" was Elijah's query, and it is mine also. Halt till you are over thirty, and your chance of receiving Christ is very little. If you are a wise soul you will say, By the grace of God to-night I decide, Christ for me. Why will ye halt? Is He not worth having? Is He not worth knowing? Indeed He is. "But I am such a sinner." You are the very one for Christ. "I have such a burden." Come to Him, and He will take it away from you. If you were the very vilest sinner under the sun, the blood of Christ would wash you whiter than snow. Come to Him. Come as you are. Come now. But, above all things, do not halt. Procrastinate no longer, I implore you. Procrastination is the thief of souls. It is the recruiting officer of hell. There are millions of souls in eternity that meant to come to Jesus some day, but somehow or other the power of Satan was so great, and what the apostle Paul calls the "deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. iii. 13) so paralysed them that they lingered and were lost.

Satan is a great preacher of procrastination. Says he, You have plenty of time. Put it off a little longer. Wait till you get into middle age. And then the cares of business occupy your mind and you do not turn to Christ. "Oh," you say, "it is all very well for you with your black coat, but we have got to work." So have I, my friends. I work all day, and sometimes all night too. I work as hard as any of you. This is often the lie of the devil, viz., that you are too busy to attend to the affairs of the soul. That is not it, my

friend, at all. You are not too busy, but you are *indifferent*. And sin has begun to harden your soul. And when you get old, what then? Satan will tell you that you have missed the day of grace and salvation altogether. Stop, my hearer, that is a lie too. As long as you have a year, day, or an hour left on earth you may be saved. Thank God, you may be saved to-night. Oh, do not halt any longer. Come to Jesus. If you have halted till now, halt no longer.

Let us now return to Carmel, and see the way Elijah takes with the prophets. He says, "Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under" (ver. 25). He gives them the first chance, and they prepare their sacrifice. What is the next thing? They cry: "O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made" (ver. 26). And now the prophet gets a little sarcastic as he says, "Cry aloud! for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked" (ver. 27). I think Elijah was right in the way he treated them. He knew the whole thing was false, just as to-day everything that is not Christ is false. What you and I want is the truth. And Christ is the Truth.

The end of the day comes and no fire has fallen upon Baal's sacrifice. Then the man of God says to them: "Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down" (ver. 30). The Lord's altar had been broken down, but Elijah builds it up. He stands for the whole truth of God. "And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of

the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name" (ver. 31). Why twelve stones? It was the expression of the unity of Israel. Instead of being a divided, broken-up people, Elijah knew that before God they were one. So also the servant of God to-day who knows the truth, knows that there is one Body and one Spirit, and one Head in heaven. And of course he will endeavour to maintain this glorious truth.

Here, in the face of all these enemies, Elijah owns the unity of Israel, and acknowledges Jehovah as LORD. Then to show that there was no sham about his actions he says, "Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood" (ver. 33). He is determined to let them see that there is no fire there. The truth of God is very simple. There is no underhand work about it. And he says: "Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water" (vers. 34, 35). He puts the thing to the perfect test. And what then? "And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear, me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast *turned their heart back again*" (vers. 36, 37). What did he want? He wanted their hearts for the Lord. And, beloved friend, I can say from the bottom of my heart, what I want is your heart. I do not want your brains or

your money, but I want your heart for Christ. I know I cannot draw you to Christ. But if I could I would.

"Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench" (ver. 38). That burnt sacrifice was indeed a sweet savour going up to God, a figure of Christ in death. The next moment there was the most wonderful testimony in Israel that Jehovah was God. "And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God" (ver. 39).

Condign and immediate judgment then fell on the prophets of Baal; for God must judge idolatry. Elijah then says to Ahab, "Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain" (ver. 41). He gives Ahab's true character. His only thought was eating and drinking. Is there a man here whose only thought is to eat and drink? Well, **you** have to die. Ahab is a type of a downright worldling. He did not care a straw whether Jehovah was God or Baal was God, and he died a miserable, wretched death. He was mortally wounded at Ramoth-gilead, and the dogs licked up his blood. If you die as you are, you will die a sinner's death, and you will have a sinner's coffin, a sinner's burial, a sinner's resurrection, a sinner's judgment, and a sinner's lost eternity. May God save you to-night.

Do not let Ahab's history be repeated in yours. Be like Elijah. He can say to Ahab, You go, the rain is coming. And Ahab goes up. Look at the difference between the man of God and the man of the world. "So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And

Elijah went up to the top of Carmel ; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees" (ver. 42). He is in prayer. One feasts, the other prays. No wonder God opens the heavens. He went and prayed the first time, "Lord, do not send rain." And now the second time he prays, "Lord, send the rain." Then Elijah's servant comes and says : "Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain." Oh, how rich, how full is the blessing which God gives. "And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah ; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel" (vers. 44-46).

After this Ahab tells Jezebel that Elijah has slain all the prophets of Baal, for he had taken them to the brook Kishon, and slain them there. He was only doing what Jehovah had commanded long before. They are all put to death in accordance with the instructions given in the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy. He merely obeyed the Word of God. Ahab tells Jezebel, and she sends to Elijah a dreadful threat. "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." And what now? "And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there" (chap. xix. 2, 3).

How came this flight about? Such is man, my friends. Such is even a servant of God, if he get his eye off the Lord. If a man lose faith in God he will

flee away. Elijah got dejected and fled. And was he really a man of God? Who can doubt that? He reminds us of John the Baptist. When he was pursuing his ministry he could say, "There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose" (Mark i. 7). But when he is locked up in prison he actually sends his disciples to say, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Matt. xi. 3). It makes all the difference the circumstances you are in. The Baptist's faith fails for a moment, and he doubts the Messiah. Jezebel's threat causes Elijah's faith to fail, and he flies to the desert. But look now at the beautiful grace of God to His dear servant: "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers" (ver. 4). I think whenever a man speaks that way he does think he is better a good deal, but that no one understands or appreciates him. That is my conviction. For a moment his faith had failed. And here we learn a lesson of the weakness that may mark any one of us. We, too, get a little bit disappointed, and we go under some juniper tree. There is a juniper tree somewhere for you and me. I want you to avoid getting under a bitter tree like that. It was as bitter as Elijah's own spirit was. There is many a Christian to-day that has made a mistake and he wants to die. He says, I cannot do any more. Like Elijah he too says, "For I am not better than my fathers." At the back of his heart he thinks that he is rather better, depend upon it.

But what does the Lord do? Elijah goes to sleep

presently, and while he is sleeping he is touched by an angel, who says : " Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again " (vers. 5, 6). A minister from God is at his side. Not now is he tended by a raven or a widow, but by God's own loving hand. This weary man, who thinks nobody cares for him, looks up and sees this much-needed refreshment. Who put that there? God Himself. Ah, beloved friends, God does not give His servants up, blessed be His name. When I fail it is quite possible that my brethren may give me up. My Master will not. The Lord does not fling His servants off as the devil does his slaves. When the devil has got all the work out of you that he can get, he will leave you to die like a dog in the field. But it is not so with the Lord.

Well, Elijah goes to sleep a second time, and the angel comes again and says : " Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God " (vers. 7, 8). There he learns some marvellous lessons. God's food sustains him these forty days and nights, and then God teaches him that He has been at work in a way that His servant knew nothing of. God had a great regard for Elijah spite of his failure. There is a remarkable prediction regarding him in the last chapter of the Old Testament. " Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord : and He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their

fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. iv. 5, 6). No doubt in a day yet to come God will give him a wonderful place in connection with the restoration of that Israel upon the earth whom he had failed to restore. The Lord has not given him up.

But before that day even we see Elijah again. If I take you to the Mount of Transfiguration, when the blessed Lord was there, who were with Him? Moses and Elijah. The other night we saw Moses was forty days and forty nights on the mount without food. To-night we have seen Elijah going in the strength of God's meat forty days and forty nights. It is divine power in each case sustaining human feebleness. That is the lesson. There is no place where divine grace cannot sustain you and me. Grace first of all saves us, and then sustains us in every possible difficulty in the pathway. Such is the blessedness of the knowledge of God.

What took place with Elijah at Horeb is very instructive. He goes into a cave, and the Lord comes and says to him, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" (ver. 9). He ought to have been standing in Israel, still witnessing for God, instead of hiding himself. "And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice" (vers. 11, 12). It is the still small voice that touches him. When he hears it he hides his face in his mantle and comes forth. There usually comes the moment, if a

servant of God has got a little bit away, when the Lord speaks to him, in a still small voice, and he is restored. So was it in this case.

God here gives Elijah the sense that He has a deep interest in him. He says to Elijah, 'You go back and anoint Elisha in your room, you are tired of earth, but before I take you up, I want you to know this, you thought you were the only witness for God in Israel, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (ver. 18). It was a wonderful discovery to Elijah. And I daresay from that moment Elijah said to himself, "If God had all these men left, why did not I find them out?" He had said, "And I, even I only am left; and they seek my life to take it away" (ver. 14). He was immensely mistaken. So are we oftentimes. If we have light from God let us see to it that we pass it on, never forgetting, however, that all light and all grace are not in you and me. God always has His witnesses, and He will have them right on to the end.

CHAPTER VIII.

EZEKIEL'S FORTY DAYS.

ISRAEL'S END ; OR GUILT, GRACE, AND GLORY.

(EZEKIEL iv. 1-II.)

“**N**OW it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, the word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar ; and the hand of the Lord was there upon him” (Ezek. i. 1-3).

These verses introduce to us a very remarkable man, who was alike a priest, a poet, and a prophet of no mean order. The meaning of his name, Ezekiel, “whom God will strengthen,” is instructive when we remember what he himself passed through as a captive. It was as being directly sustained by God, that he was able to identify himself with the sorrows of the guilty nation whose judgment he first predicts with great detail, and whose final deliverance and exalta-

tion by the hand of God, he describes with the utmost precision.

Josephus states that Ezekiel was a youth when carried away captive, but whether such was the case we have no certain means of being assured ; and the general character of his writings would scarcely bear out the supposition. He was contemporary with Jeremiah and Daniel, and his prophecy would appear to open about the fifth year of his captivity, B.C. 594. This we learn from the second verse of chapter i. You will remember that Jehoiachin, king of Judah, was carried into captivity in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar, along with a great many of his subjects. Thus the record stands : " And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it. And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers : and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said. And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths : none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. And all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all that were strong and

apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon " (2 Kings xxiv. 11-16).

Though the power of Judah was broken, and Jehoiachin carried captive, Jerusalem was not then destroyed, and over it the King of Babylon set Jehoiachin's uncle, changing his name from Mattaniah to Zedekiah. He reigned eleven years in Jerusalem, doing evil in the sight of the Lord, and eventually breaking his covenant, and rebelling against the King of Babylon, thus leading to the sack of the city in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar (see 2 Kings xxv. 8-10). During these eleven years Ezekiel dwelt by the river Chebar, a captive, and there it was that he says, "The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God." He there learned that God's ancient people were not only in captivity but to be in captivity to the Gentiles, and that, because of their guilt God would not own them any longer. He further learned that the power of the sword was to be passed into the hands of the Gentiles, although, as I have said, at that time the capture of Jerusalem, then ruled over by Zedekiah, had not yet taken place.

While at Chebar Ezekiel receives the following instructions from the Lord (chap. iv. 1-11): "Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and portray upon it the city, even Jerusalem: and lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battering rams against it round about. Moreover, take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city; and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel. Lie thou also

upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it ; according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days : so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah *forty days* : I have appointed thee each day for a year. Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm shall be uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it. And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege. Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentils, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof, according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side, three hundred and ninety days shalt thou eat thereof. And thy meat which thou shalt eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day : from time to time shalt thou eat it. Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of an hin : from time to time shalt thou drink."

In representing thus the impending siege of Jerusalem, God points out the years of iniquity that led to her judgment—for Israel in general three hundred and ninety, and for Judah forty. To Ezekiel comes the striking command, "Lie thou also upon thy left side . . . three hundred and ninety days" (ver. 4). And then : "Lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah *forty* days. I have appointed thee each day for a year" (ver. 6).

The sin of Israel exceeded that of Judah, but Israel is looked at as a whole, and the interests of the whole nation are not only before the eye of the prophet, but he is to identify himself with their iniquities. However little the guilty nation may have felt, without doubt this godly prophet deeply felt and owned before God the sin of his nation, and accepted the consequences thereof, and whether for three hundred and ninety days for Israel, or forty days for Judah, bore their iniquities in spirit before God in the remarkable position which these verses describe, himself, without doubt, sustained by God, otherwise it would have been impossible for him, for so protracted a period, to have so remained and obeyed the strict injunction, "And thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege" (ver. 9), or lived upon the scanty diet detailed in verses 9 to 11. The point of Ezekiel's "forty days" would seem to be this, that he absolutely identifies himself with the iniquity of his nation, and is prepared to bear the consequences of their iniquity, and that without a murmur.

One very striking feature in Ezekiel's history would seem to be the entire subordination of his whole life and feelings as a man to the great prophetic work to which he was called. He neither speaks nor acts like an ordinary man, but thinks and feels as a prophet. One very striking illustration of this is found on the occasion of the death of his wife. There is something deeply touching in his brief narrative of the moment when "the desire of his eyes" was taken away with a stroke, and when he was commanded not to mourn. The word of the Lord ran thus: "Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a

stroke : yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. So I spake unto the people in the morning ; and at even my wife died ; and I did in the morning as I was commanded " (chap. xxiv. 15-18).

That was indeed a memorable day. God noted it by the command, " Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this same day : the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day " (chap. xxiv. 2). The day that Nebuchadnezzar began the siege the wife of the prophet died, and although she was the object of his tenderest affections he was not to mourn, and did not. That he possessed the sympathies and affections of humanity is manifest by the beautiful touch of tenderness with which the narrative is introduced ; but he subordinates himself entirely to the will of Jehovah, and sinks the interests of his individual life in the work of his prophetic office.

All this is intensely in contrast with almost every other great servant of God, whose history we have recorded in the Old Testament. While the events of Ezekiel's personal history are thus kept out of sight, it is interesting to notice the remarkable vigour and energy clearly manifest in his character. God knew that he had to oppose a " rebellious house," who were " impudent and hardhearted " (chap. iii. 7-9), and hence said to him : " Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead ; fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house."

Ezekiel's writings abound with figurative representations, but whether unfolding heavenly visions, or truths clothed in the garb of allegory and enigma, definiteness and vigour of conception mark his words in a very striking way. What he saw in vision is described with a clearness, sharpness of outline, and minuteness of detail which almost belong to real existence; and while one says again we never meet him in his writings as an ordinary man, you cannot but feel that he was manifestly an extraordinary one—he was just, in fact, the suited vessel that God could take up and use to reveal His mind in the unfolding of striking truths as to Israel's judgment near at hand, or her future glory which his prophecies disclose.

It may help you to read his prophecy with greater interest if I briefly glance at the salient features of the book, and indicate its general outline. In attempting to do this, I cannot do better than quote the words of another, to whom I am indebted for much light on the subject. "The first twenty-three chapters contain testimonies from God against Israel in general, and against Jerusalem in particular. After that the surrounding nations are judged; and then, beginning with chapter xxxiii., the prophet resumes the subject of Israel, announcing their restoration as well as their judgment. Finally, from chapter xl. to the end we have the description of the temple and of the division of the land." *

* "Synopsis of the Books of the Bible," by J. N. Darby (Morrish, London), vol. ii., p. 368. No more valuable or helpful expository work on Scripture exists in the English language than this. It will well repay careful perusal, and is strongly recommended.

The general scope of the book is as follows :—

The earlier chapters describe the sin of Israel which made God's judgment of them a necessity, as His name had been dishonoured and His house polluted. The glory of the Lord thereupon leaves that house and retires to heaven. The judgment then falls on Jerusalem, and the nation is scattered. Their many enemies, who rejoice in their chastisement at God's hand, and in the removal of His house and presence from the earth, are then severally judged by Him. Next, a work of repentance and self-judgment in Israel takes place on their restoration to their land and to God's enjoyed favour. Their ancient foe, the Assyrian, then seeks again to dislodge them, and is overwhelmed by God's own direct interposition. The temple, God's earthly house, is then rebuilt, never again to be disturbed. The glory returns to that house and to Israel, in connection with their acceptance of their once-rejected but now gladly-owned Messiah—the true David. The book closes with God's blessing flowing out through the whole earth, now at peace and rest under the sway of Jehovah-Jesus, the last word of the prophecy being, "The Lord is there" (xlvi. 35).

The destruction of Jerusalem is the central point of Ezekiel's earlier predictions. Before that visitation of God's chastening hand arrived, through His chosen rod, Nebuchadnezzar, He warns the people against indulging in blind confidence in Egyptian help (Ezek. xvii. 15-19; compare Jer. xxxvii. 7-9), to rid themselves of the Babylonian yoke, and assures them that the destruction of their city and temple was certain, and near at hand. This prediction is finally confirmed by the announcement that Nebuchadnezzar had invested the city (chap. xxiv. 2).

During the interval between the commencement of the siege and the arrival of the news that Jerusalem had actually fallen (chap. xxxiii. 21), the burden of his prophecy (chaps. xxv.-xxxii.) is against foreign nations, whom God would judge because they had interfered with those who had been His people, but whom He, because of their sins, had now not only called Lo-ammi (not My people), but treated as such.

From the thirty-third chapter on, his principal object is to show how God will yet step in and restore Judah and Israel, now captive and scattered, to their own land, and bless them under the true David, when He will "make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms, any more at all" (chap. xxxvii. 22). Thereafter follow the final judgment of their earliest foe—the Assyrian—the Gog and Magog of chapters xxxviii. and xxxix., and then the directions regarding the rebuilding of Jehovah's temple, the re-establishment of sacrifices suited to the moment, and the redivision of the land of Palestine.

It will be impossible to go much into detail, but a cursory glance at the contents of the three main divisions, just indicated, I will attempt. Chapter i. opens with Ezekiel beholding a vision of God's throne, not now, as formerly, seen in Jerusalem, but outside the city and unconnected with it. The attributes of God, under the figure of four distinct classes of created beings on earth—a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle—the four being united in one—are the supporters of this throne on which the God of truth sits. It is

evidently the universal sovereign throne of God here presented, as in relation to the Gentiles. Those who had hitherto been owned as His people He judges from that throne. He is no longer in their midst. What Ezekiel saw deeply impressed him, and he says : "This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard the voice of one that spake" (ver. 28). This reminds one strongly of the vision John had in Patmos when he fell at the Lord's feet as dead (Rev. i. 17).

What Ezekiel heard, as given in chapter ii., indicates plainly God's relation to Israel. And he said, "Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee" (ver. 1). This epithet, "Son of man," is the one by which God repeatedly, right through the book, addresses His prophet, and gives us the key to His position in relation to Israel. It is Christ's own title, the one by which He loved to speak of Himself all through the Gospels, where He is viewed as the rejected One of Israel, and really as being outside the nation. By God's giving it to Ezekiel, the prophet is put in direct connection with Christ as rejected. It is very important to apprehend the import of this title, which the 8th Psalm attributes to Jesus in connection with His rejection and exaltation, and which the Lord Himself specifically adopts as being rejected as the Messiah (see Psalm ii.) by Israel. I refer to His striking injunction to His disciples recorded by Luke. He had asked them, "Whom say the people that I am? . . . Peter, answering, said, The Christ of God. And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing; saying, *The Son of man* must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders

and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day" (Luke ix. 18-22).

As regards Israel, God was rejected, and Ezekiel takes his place with Him and His throne, and consequently is sent with messages to the people here described as "impudent," "stiff-hearted," and "most rebellious." He was to speak whether they would "hear" or "forbear," but any way they should "know that there hath been a prophet among them" (ii. 4-7). He then has handed to him a roll of a book, written within and without, like the one John saw (see Rev. v. 1).

In chapter iii. Ezekiel eats the roll which he had received, finding it sweet as honey in his mouth. God's communications are always sweet to the receiver, though their final intent have not that character. He is then strengthened of God and bid go to the children of his people. It needed that his forehead should be as adamant (ver. 9) to testify to such "a rebellious house," whose moral iniquities compelled God to cast them off. Carried by the Spirit of God to Tel-abib among the captives (ver. 15), he then again sees the glory of the Lord (ver. 23), and is told not to go among the people. They were so rebellious that they were not to be warned. God would make his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth (ver. 26) to enforce his silence, for He would no more plead with them in love, as He had done by Jeremiah, until He again opened his mouth.

Chapter iv., which we have already considered (see page 148), depicts the impending siege of, and famine at, Jerusalem, which Jehovah, in chapter v. says, He "had set in the midst of the nations and countries round about her" (ver. 5) to give a true

testimony to Himself. So far from that had she been that her "wickedness more than the nations round about her" (ver. 6) compelled His condign judgment, a just retribution for her sins. She therefore instead of being a witness to Him should be "a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment unto the nations round about" (ver. 15).

Chapter vi. shows that this judgment was to be executed not only on Jerusalem, but on all the high places of the mountains of Israel—notorious for their idols—as well as the valleys and rivers. They should know that Jehovah had not "said in vain that I would do this evil unto them" (ver. 10), for those far off should die of pestilence, and those near by should fall by the sword, yet mercy would spare a remnant (ver. 8).

The desolation culminates in chapter vii., when an end comes on "the four corners of the land" (ver. 2). "Mischief shall come upon mischief" (ver. 26) is the striking conclusion. The reason of all this overwhelming judgment by Jehovah is plain. "As for the beauty of his ornament, he set it in majesty: but they made the images of their abominations and of their detestable things therein; therefore have I made it unto them an unclean thing (see margin). And I will give it into the hands of strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall pollute it" (vers. 20, 21). The temple, the place of His holiness, into which God's professing people had introduced idolatry in all its forms, was to be polluted by "the worst of the heathen" (ver. 24). With chapter vii. the first prophecy which delineates the judgment of God's earthly people concludes. They no longer are His witnesses, save as their

very judgment, lasting to this day, is a standing testimony to the truth of His Word, a solemn consideration for faithless and Christless Christendom.

With chapter viii. commences a new section of Ezekiel's prophecy, extending to the end of chapter xix. In it are a number of distinct revelations. The prophet is in his own house, with the elders of Judah, when Jehovah's glory appears to him, and, in "the visions of God," he is taken to Jerusalem, "to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north, where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy" (ver. 3). He then sees in detail the reasons for God's judgment, as he beholds the awful idolatry carried on there by the very leaders of Israel. The year before the Lord had threatened to give up His Sanctuary. Now Ezekiel sees why He was compelled to do it.

In chapter ix. the destruction of Jerusalem lowers on the threshold, and the men with slaughter-weapons are seen (vers. 1, 2). Then "the glory of the God of Israel" begins to depart from the house. It first goes up from the cherub to the threshold of the house (ver. 3), and thereon God commands the deeply deserved vengeance to be executed on those who had so sinned. Those who "sighed and cried for the abominations done," were to be spared (ver. 4), none other. The mass showed their moral state of depravity by saying, "The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not" (ver. 9). Because He had not judged their sin they inferred that He was indifferent to it. Fatal mistake!

Chapter x. is intensely interesting. The throne and its Occupant are again in view (ver. 1). The man clothed with linen and possessing the ink-horn

(ix. 2, 3) is thus commanded: "Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city. And he went in in my sight. Now the cherubims stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in ; and the cloud filled the inner court. Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house ; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was filled with the brightness of the LORD's glory" (vers. 2-4). That house had been filled with the Lord's glory at first, for deepest blessing (see 2 Chron. v. 13, 14). Now it was similarly for judgment. The city which contained it was to be consumed with coals of fire. Jehovah's ire could no longer be restrained, and He leaves His throne, stands upon the threshold, and, so to say, superintends the judgment He has commanded. There is something intensely solemn in this. The cherubims and the crushing wheels of that throne, again detailed here (vers. 7-17), could have effected this easily, but not so, the dishonoured Lord of that sadly-defiled house stands on its very threshold, personally to direct the judgment which would efface its existence. Nebuchadnezzar a little later was the providential power used to this end, but the personal intervention of Jehovah here could not but deeply strike the spiritual mind.

Chapter xi. reveals the spirit of unbelief that dominated the dwellers in Jerusalem. The prophet sees five and twenty princes of the people whom God describes as "men that devise mischief and give wicked counsel to this city" (vers. 2, 3). These twenty-five men were, I judge, the high priest and the twenty-four heads of the courses of the priests, which

shows the awful state of affairs when the official leaders of religion were the prime movers in idolatry and every sin. They regarded Jerusalem as impregnable, spite of Jeremiah's previous warnings. These God afresh threatens, and one of them dies on the spot, as Ezekiel speaks (ver. 13). This leads him to intercession, and he learns that, as regards those who had already been taken captive, God would be to them "a little sanctuary" (ver. 16), and bring them back to their land eventually.

Then the glory of the Lord, which in chapter x. 18, 19 had moved from the threshold of the house, as if loath to leave it, and stood over the cherubims—who in their turn mounted up from the earth—took its final departure. We read, "And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city" (ver. 23). That mountain, I conclude, was the Mount of Olives, from whence Jesus went up, and to which He will yet return.

So the glory of God left the earth, and though it revisited it at the birth of the Lord Jesus, again it retired when He, rejected of earth, ascended to heaven. When He shall return that glory will, on the ground of His redemption work, not only fill the house, yet to be rebuilt, but will flood the earth as well (see Num. xiv. 21). "Lord, hasten that day," our hearts may well cry.

Chapter xii. foretells the ineffectual efforts of King Zedekiah to escape the snare set for him, and predicts his being brought to Babylon. "Yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there" (ver. 13), is the divine forecast of his sad history—some five years later. "So they took the king, and brought him up

to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon" (2 Kings xxv. 6, 7). The godless proverb in Israel, "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth" (ver. 22), *i.e.*, that God's messages were worthless and not to be heeded, He now says shall cease to be used, for the Son of man was bidden to say, "The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision" (ver. 23). Unbelief might say, "The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off" (ver. 27). God's answer was, "There shall none of my words be prolonged any more; but the word which I have spoken shall be done" (ver. 28).

In chapter xiii. the false prophets of Israel who seduced and deceived the people by "vain vision" and "lying divination" (ver. 7), saying, "Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar" (ver. 10), are exposed and judged.

Chapter xiv. shows the elders of Israel again sitting before the prophet, who learn that they will be judged according to their iniquities. "Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols" (ver. 6) is then uttered in the ears of prophets and people alike, God declaring that the presence of such men in their midst as Noah, Daniel, and Job would not stay His judgment. Their righteousness would deliver only their own souls (vers. 14-20).

Under the figure of the vine tree (see Ps. lxxx. Isa. v.) which yields no fruit, chapter xv. shows that only utter consumption was before Jerusalem

and its inhabitants. A worthless tree was only fit for fuel.

In chapter xvi. Jerusalem is reminded of God's dealings in grace, and that what had been in misery and degradation He had washed, anointed, and beautified. All His favour, however, she had used in the service of idols, and to procure the support of Egypt and Assyria. She had played the harlot, and should be dealt with as such, her very paramours being made the executors of God's just judgment of her. Spite of this, His oath and covenant of promise (see ver. 8) would yet be made good (vers. 62, 63).

The riddle and the parable of the two great eagles of chapter xvii. find their explanation in Zedekiah's certain judgment, for breaking his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar. This he had made, and sworn by God (see 2 Chron. xxxvi. 13) to keep. God had put the power of the kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's hand, for he was the head of gold that Daniel saw. The Babylonian king feared God in measure, and respected His name. By intriguing with Pharaoh to escape Nebuchadnezzar's yoke, Zedekiah broke his covenant to which Jehovah's name had been attached. This filled up the cup of his wickedness, and led to his downfall, for God said, "As I live, saith the Lord God, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die" (ver. 16).

Chapter xviii. contains the important principle that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of

the wicked shall be upon him" (ver. 20). The individual would be dealt with by God according to his own conduct. It is not a question of what their fathers had been. Their own iniquities demanded and would entail God's judgment. Long before, God had threatened to visit "the iniquities of the fathers upon the children" (see Exod. xxxiv. 7). This principle is departed from. Individually they were guilty, and as such would be judged; nevertheless, where repentance was manifest, God would pardon, for He had no pleasure in the death of the wicked (ver. 23). It must be borne in mind that what is spoken of here is temporal judgment, physical death, because of sin now. It gives us no teaching as to the eternal judgment of sin, which is taught elsewhere.

The demand for "lamentation for the princes of Israel" in chapter xix. gives in allegory the subjugation of Jehoiakim (2 Kings xxiv. 1), and then the captivity of Jehoiachin, terminating thus the regal power of the house of David, which had no longer "a sceptre to rule" (ver. 14).

Chapter xx. commences a new prophecy which terminates in chapter xxiii. God reminds Israel of what He had done for them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt "and into a land flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands" (ver. 6). They had rebelled on their road to that land in the wilderness. "Nevertheless," He says, "mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness" (ver. 17). Spite of all His grace they had polluted themselves, and God determined to scatter them among the heathen. But God would fulfil all His purposes, and would yet re-gather them, saying, "I will bring you out from the people,

and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm" (ver. 34). But as he pled with their fathers, and purged them in the wilderness, so would He yet do to the returning house of Israel. And the rebels would die on their road to the land (vers. 34-38).

Chapter xxi. unfolds in very striking language the onslaught of Nebuchadnezzar on Jerusalem. It seemed a question in his mind whether he should attack Jerusalem or Ammon. "For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways (to Jerusalem and Ammon), to use divination: he made his arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver" (ver. 21). Jerusalem might think it "false divination" (ver. 23), but God's judgment must be carried out, so the sword is unsheathed and not to return to its scabbard. God's throne had left the earth, "the times of the Gentiles" had begun; the judgment-day of the wicked prince of Israel—Zedekiah the profane—had come, and God would overturn—overturn—overturn—until He come whose was the throne and the diadem—even Christ Himself (vers. 25-27).

In chapter xxii. Jehovah sums up and recapitulates the sins of what He now calls "the bloody city" (ver. 2), and of the princes, the prophets, the priests, and the people of Israel. He says, however, "I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none" (ver. 30). Judgment must have its way, but one cannot but note the tenderness of God for His people, ere the stroke fell, strikingly reminding us of the blessed Lord's words at a later date: "How often would I have

gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not" (Luke xiii. 34).

In chapter xxiii. the sins of Samaria (Israel) and Jerusalem (Judah) are very solemnly portrayed. In each case illicit intercourse with the heathen, which He had forbidden, is the ground of Jehovah's judgment. They were sisters in sin, and should be similarly judged (ver. 32). God vindicates His judgment, saying, "Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms" (ver. 5). They were to reap what they had sown.

Chapter xxiv. records the fact that "the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day" (ver. 2). The siege of the city now commences. The same day, as we have seen, Ezekiel's wife dies (ver. 18). The terrible judgment falling on Jerusalem is graphically described under the figure of a caldron on the fire.

Chapters xxv. to xxxii. are occupied with detailing God's threatened judgments on the various nations round about Israel because of their bygone conduct towards, and existing spirit of hatred to His people. They would rejoice at the destruction of Jerusalem, and the setting aside of God's earthly sanctuary. He would let them know that though His earthly people had failed He still was God. If judgment fell upon His own people, because of their sin, His hand would also be upon those who hated the objects of His love. The latter He had been obliged to chastise because of their sins.

Chapter xxv. brings Ammon, Moab, Edom, and the Philistines before us as the objects of prophetic dealing by God. They were really intruders in, and

dwellers on, Israel's territory. The first three were related to God's people by consanguinity (see Genesis xix. 36-38 as regards Moab and Ammon, and Genesis xxv. 25-30 regarding Edom). When Israel took possession of Palestine, by God's command, under Joshua, Philistia, a strip of land about forty miles long, and ten to twenty broad, lying between Joppa and Gaza, on the sea-coast, and west of the tribes of Dan and Simeon, was not subjugated (see Joshua xiv. 2). As a consequence of this failure on Israel's part, the Philistines were ever thorns in their sides, and sometimes their masters. They were finally subdued in the days of Samuel (see 1 Samuel vii. 13). Confederates in opposing God's chosen people, these four nations are now marked out as special objects of divine vengeance, for, if you touch God's people, you touch Him.

Their delight that Israel was humbled by God did not better their case. The judgment of Edom is graphically described by Obadiah, verses 17 and 18 of his prophecy confirming God's threats found in our chapter, "I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel" (ver. 14). Remarkable further instruction as to this is given by Daniel, who says that, when the king of the north shall yet attack Israel (see Ezek. xxxviii., xxxix.), "these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon" (Daniel xi. 41). The reason for this is plain. God will finally punish them, and the Philistines too, by the very people they so persistently persecuted. When Messiah sets up His kingdom, and Ephraim and Judah are again one, Isaiah tells us, "They shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them

of the east together ; they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab ; and the children of Ammon shall obey them " (Isaiah xi. 14). The retributive judgment of God will yet be executed by Israel on these nations, who long ago so oppressed them.

Chapters xxvi., xxvii., and xxviii. form a separate prophecy regarding Tyre, which was in Israel's territory. That godless city, alluded to by the Lord Jesus in the Gospels (see Matt. xi. 21), represents the world with its riches and lusts. It hated God and God's people, and was glad of Israel's fall, as giving freer course to the gratification of her own selfishness. Her triumph God thus checks, saying in chapter xxvi., "Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha! she is broken that was the gates of the people ; she is turned unto me ; I shall be replenished now she is laid waste. Therefore, saith the Lord God, Behold I am against thee, O Tyrus" (vers. 2, 3) ; "I will make thee like the top of a rock ; thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon ; thou shalt be built no more" (ver. 14) ; "Though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again" (ver. 21). This prediction Alexander the Great was the means of carrying out (B.C. 332).

The motives that move the world are wonderfully exposed by God in these prophecies. It dislikes Him and His people alike, but must yet answer to Him, and receive judgment at His hands.

Chapter xxvii. describes the grandeur and commercial relations with all the world of Tyre, and then announces that in "the day of thy ruin" (ver. 27) all her former friends "shall hiss at thee ; thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt be any more" (ver. 36). Such is the world and its end, fickle as the waters

which carried Tyre's ships. Tyre represents the commercial glory of the world which passes away.

Chapter xxviii. depicts the prince and the King of Tyre, both judged for their pride. He who is the prince of this world's glory (see John xiv. 30, xvi. 11) is represented here as a man, and is told, "Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God . . . thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas" (vers. 2, 8). There is little doubt that in what follows, in verses 11 to 19, the King of Tyre is emblematical of Satan—the prince and god of this world. A creature of God, his heart was lifted up; he corrupted his brightness, became an apostate from God, and the enemy of God and man. His advantages had been the occasion of his fall. He exalted himself against God, and was cast out, as profane, from the mountain of God.

Sidon's fate is then told us. Sidon had been associated with Tyre as "a pricking brier" and "a grieving thorn" to the house of Israel (ver. 24). Her judgment is predicted, and then God declares that He will re-gather the house of Israel, when the judgment of the nations is executed. His words are, "Yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I am the LORD their God" (ver. 26). God's purposes are never frustrated either by the sins of His people or the pride of His foes.

Chapters xxix. to xxxii. give us the judgment of Egypt, Israel's old oppressor. God had given Nebuchadnezzar the supreme power. Egypt as a nation

was proud of its governmental power. She had said, "The river is mine, and I have made it" (xxix. 9). God would not allow this assumption, nor permit her to have what He had given to Nebuchadnezzar for His own purposes. Every nation must bow to him. It was God's ordainment, for he was "the mighty one of the heathen." Assyria had already fallen (see xxxi. 10, 11). Pharaoh must fall also. If Tyre—which Nebuchadnezzar besieged by land and water for thirteen years without success—yielded him no wages, Egypt should be his recompense, and her judgment would lead to Israel's blessing (xxix. 18-21).

It is important in reading these prophecies to observe that Nebuchadnezzar is regarded as the servant of God, in executing His judgment, both on Jerusalem and on the nations round about, and thus really freeing the land of Israel of them. Doubtless, in all this which has historically taken place, we have a picture of that which will yet occur in Israel's future history, when God again puts His hand to recover, restore, and bless them in their land, then to be forever free from every oppressor.

In chapter xxxiii. we enter a new phase of God's dealing with His people. We look on to the last days, yet to come. The people are looked at as having been judged. He has carried out His word spoken in Hosea; they are, "Lo-ammi," that is, "not My people." Their judgment has been but partial, however, for bad indeed as that was which Ezekiel describes, before Messiah's return their case will be yet more terrible, as they suffer under the two beasts described in Rev. xiii.—the revived Roman Empire and Antichrist

Individual conduct is again in question in chapter xxxiv. The shepherds of Israel are exposed; their

conduct toward the flock being entirely in contrast to the tender care of God, who now emphatically declares : " Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered ; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be : there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick : but I will destroy the fat and the strong ; I will feed them with judgment " (vers. 11-16). He further says : " And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David ; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them ; I the LORD have spoken it " (vers. 23, 24). He then adds, " There shall be showers of blessing." It is God who will deliver the sheep, and bring in the true David, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom, in verse 29, He calls " a plant of renown." Of Israel He says, " And ye are my flock, the flock of my pasture " (ver. 31). God again owns them as His people.

Chapter xxxv. again brings Edom, Israel's blood-

relation and perpetual hater into view (see ver. 5), God's judgment on them will be according to their hatred of His people.

In chapter xxxvi. the restoration and blessing of Israel is most touchingly unfolded. The mountains of Israel are addressed. "Ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel ; for they are at hand to come" (ver. 8). Their foes had declared the land to be one that devoured its inhabitants, that is, that it was barren. God would make it fruitful beyond all measure, and multiply earthly blessings to His people (ver. 30). More than this, He would bless them spiritually. Verses 24-29 describe their spiritual regeneration, alluded to by the Lord when speaking to Nicodemus. The Jew must be new-born to enter God's kingdom on its earthly side, just as, to-day, the Christian is born again to participate in its joys on the heavenly side.

Chapter xxxvii. gives us Israel's national resurrection. We behold a valley full of dry bones, which the prophet presently sees coming together clothed with flesh and skin, living, and standing on their feet, an exceeding great army. This, he learns, is the *whole* house of Israel (ver. 11). God will yet take the twelve tribes out of their grave among the nations, where they now are, put His Spirit in them, and cause them to live (see vers. 12-14). Under the figure of the two sticks, joined in one, we get the re-uniting of the divided kingdoms of Ephraim and Judah. They are made one nation. God says, " And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel ; and one king shall be king to them all ; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all " (ver. 22).

Then the true David, the Lord Jesus Christ, will be their king. Absolutely cleansed from their sins (ver. 23), they will walk in the fear of the Lord. They will be under the blessing of the everlasting covenant of peace (ver. 26). God sets His sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. What infinite grace after all the sin of that nation, culminating in the murder of His Son and their Messiah, for God thus to say, "My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (ver. 27).

Chapters xxxviii. and xxxix. present the final attack of Gog and Magog, their oldest enemy—the Assyrian—upon them, when replaced in Palestine, and enjoying God's blessing. The prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal—probably Russia, Muscovy, and Tobolsk (vers. 2, 3)—comes up against Israel, only to be utterly overwhelmed by God, who will maintain His people according to His word. The Gog and Magog of Ezekiel must not be confounded with the Gog and Magog of Revelation xx. The former attack Israel before the millennial reign of Christ, whereas the latter come against the saints generally, at the close of the thousand years of the Lord's reign.

Chapters xl. to xlv. reveal divine instruction as to the rebuilding of God's sanctuary in the midst of His people. "A sanctuary which shall no more be defiled" (chap. xliii. 7). Connected with the rebuilding of the temple is, of necessity, found the re-establishment of sacrifices and an earthly priesthood.

The glory of the Lord revisits the earth, and Jehovah returns to His house in chapter xlv., and returns to remain, hence the striking word, "This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man

shall enter in by it, because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut" (ver. 2).

In chapter xlv. the portion of the prince, the priests, and the Levites is arranged, and the passover re-established (ver. 21).

Chapter xlvi. regulates their worship of God, now known on true redemption ground.

In chapter xlvii. waters flow from the sanctuary, healing on every hand, and the waters abound with fish. It is a striking figure of the blessing that will flow out in the millennial reign of Christ, for "everything shall live whither the river cometh" (ver. 9), is the statement. Widespread indeed will the blessing be, but it is not absolute or complete even in that day, for "the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt" (ver. 11). The millennial day of glory is imperfect at the start, and also at the finish, when Gog and Magog again oppose God. Only in the day of God—eternity—will everything be as God would have it, and, blessed be His name, will have it, to His everlasting glory.

The division of the holy land among the twelve tribes occupies chapter xlviii., as well as the place of the rebuilt Jerusalem, and the prophecy closes with the blessed statement, "And the name of the city from that day shall be Jehovah-shammah," that is, "The Lord is there" (ver. 35).

How wonderful are God's ways! How deep His mercy! Who but He would have foretold such a wondrous ending to the history of a people so guilty and disobedient as Israel had been. But God is God, and the millennial day will convince the world of that, which we know now, that "God is love."

CHAPTER IX.

JONAH'S FORTY DAYS.

FAITH AND REPENTANCE ; OR, GOD'S MESSAGE
AND NINEVEH'S RESPONSE.

(JONAH iii. 1-10 ; MATTHEW xii. 38-41.)

THERE is a very great difference, beloved friends, between God and man, and God and His servants. The contrast between the Master and the servant in the book of Jonah is very wonderful. The opening of the book tells us that the Lord said to Jonah, " Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it ; for their wickedness is come up before me " (chap. i. 2). God took notice of the wickedness of the men of Nineveh, just, beloved friend, as He takes notice of your wickedness. Do not think that His eye is not on you. It is. His hand may not be on you yet, but His eye is on you.

Now Jonah was a very wilful man, and instead of at once going to do what God told him, he does the very opposite. Do you know why Jonah did not go at once to Nineveh ? That comes out in chapter iv. When the mercy of God to this guilty and doomed city was manifested, Jonah was very displeased. He said : " I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country ? Therefore I fled

before unto Tarshish ; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil" (ver. 2).

He said, in effect, " If I go and tell them that judgment is coming, I know that there is so much goodness in the heart of my God that, if they repent, He will spare them, and I shall lose my character." Yes, that was it. And then when two millions of souls were repentant before his eyes, he was out of temper. Ah, it would not put me out of temper, if you repented. It would be the very opposite. If you were to repent and get converted, I should be thankful, not out of temper. That is what I seek to-night, and I can tell you something more, all heaven would go into ecstasy over it. Is not that wonderful? Look at the fifteenth chapter of Luke. " There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth " (ver. 10). The whole of heaven is moved from centre to circumference, from the heart of God to the angel in the most illimitable distance, all rejoicing over one sinner's salvation. Now, my friend, let heaven rejoice over your salvation to-night.

But here is a man, and how like he is to us, absolutely upset when he found that God had spared this mighty mass of people. There was never such an effect produced by a short sermon before or since. Two millions were bowed down by one preaching. Oh, may God raise up preachers like that! Oh for men whose preaching is after that stamp! But poor Jonah says, " If I go and preach coming judgment, I know God so well, that, if they repent, He will spare them, and then they will laugh at me, and I shall lose my character." Poor Jonah! He did not like the message that God gave him to deliver, and therefore

took his own way, going due west to Joppa, instead of east to Nineveh.

And now, please notice, what took place. Follow Jonah closely, and see what came out in connection with God's dealings with him, and how remarkably the Lord Jesus in the Gospels utilises his history. He says, "Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites" (Luke xi. 30); and again: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish" (see R.V.), "so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here" (Matt. xii. 39-41). Jonas was a sign to the Ninevites, of death and resurrection, and that only God could save man. That was the sign. None but the hand of God can deliver, whether Jonah or the Ninevite then, or you and me to-day.

God said to Jonah, "Go to Nineveh," which lay due east. What does he do? He packs up his traps and goes west. He makes straight for Joppa, because he wants to fly to Tarshish. The meaning of the word Tarshish is "destruction." We have a striking picture of what man is in the early part of this book. What is the end of the road you are on, unsaved friend? "Destruction." I quite admit you are passing down by Joppa, which means "pleasant." Of course the devil will make things as comfortable as he can for you in this world. But mark, my friend, there is no comfort in hell, and there is no way out of it. Do not forget this, there are ten thousand roads

to hell, but there is only one road to heaven. You can go down to hell either on the clean or the dirty side of the road, either the careless or religious side of the road. You can go down polished or unpolished. You can go down through the tap-room, the billiard-room, or the gambling saloon. I cannot tell you all the different ways by which you can go down to hell, but ten thousand would not take them all in, that is my belief. The point is, there is only one end to the pathway of man in his sins, and once a man gets there he cannot return. Again, there is only one road to heaven, and Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John xiv. 6).

Well, down goes Jonah to Joppa, and there he finds a ship going to Tarshish. I am certain of this, that if there never had been a ship in port at Joppa before, that was going to Tarshish, the devil would have had one there that day in order to help this man on his wilful course. Next, we find that he pays his fare. And you are paying your fare, my friend. I am going to glory, I am thankful to say, and my fare is paid for me. I am going there through the sovereign grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the atoning work that He has accomplished. Do I make light of it? God forbid! The price of my fare to everlasting glory includes all the dying agonies and atoning sufferings of God's eternal Son, become a man that He might die, and redeem me to God by His blood. A priceless ransom I know mine to be, for that ransom was Himself—Jesus—my own blessed Saviour. I would to God He were yours also.

I repeat Jonah paid his fare, and, unsaved friend, you are paying your fare. You are on the downward

way. Everybody knows it if you do not know it. God knows it, and the devil knows it. Jonah's downward steps were more than one. You will find he takes four steps down, for man's course, till God touches him, is always downward. He goes down to Joppa, then down to the ship, and then down the sides of the ship. And what then? God steps in. He sends a storm, and the ship is like to go to pieces, but Jonah is fast asleep. He can sleep through the storm quite unconscious of his danger. So is it often with sinners. Does it not strike you that you have slept all this time? You never yet spent a night in prayer and tears, because of your lost condition. Alas, you may yet shed plenty of tears in hell, when there will be no hand to wipe them away.

But I think I see Jonah's ship as it is tossed about. The storm is raging, and they pitch the wares overboard to lighten the ship, but it is to no purpose, and the ship is in utter jeopardy. But they know they have Jonah on board, and the shipmaster comes to him, and oh, what a shake he gives him as he says, "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" (ver. 6). He needed a good waking up. So very likely do you, but at length he was waked up. And then he has to tell the truth. He is bound to tell the truth. He has to own: "I ran away from God. I am a wicked man. I took my own way."

But, first, lots were cast to discern *the* sinner on board that ship. They said, "Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah" (ver. 7). Then they ask him: "What is thine occupation, and whence comest thou? What is thy country, and of what people art thou?" (ver. 8). You have

Jonah's whole history marked out here. And then he tells them what had taken place. "Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them" (ver. 10). When he got on board the ship going to Tarshish he evidently said, "The Lord told me to go east to Nineveh and preach a sermon I did not care to preach, so I took my own way." The truth came out. The truth has always to come out sooner or later.

When the mariners learned this, they were the more afraid. And Jonah said, "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you" (ver. 12). His judgment was just, but "nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not" (ver. 13). And now what about you, my friend? You cannot row yourself to land. You cannot save yourself. What will you do? You had better accept and own the truth of your state. What is it? Utterly lost; and absolutely helpless in yourself.

Then they took Jonah and pitched him overboard, and as he went down they doubtless said, "He is lost." That was what they thought, but it was the moment of his salvation, for just then God stepped in. He had prepared a great fish, and the fish swallowed Jonah. In the belly of that fish he went down to the bottom of the mountains, as he says further on, and went also through some terrible exercises. The first chapter gives us the wilfulness of Jonah, and the second chapter describes the deep soul exercises he passed through ere he learned salvation.

Note his experiences : " I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me ; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice " (chap. ii. 2). He is writing this story long afterwards. He never forgot these three days and three nights ; and I tell you what it is, a man who gets into the belly of hell, in his experience on earth, will never get into the belly of hell in actuality for eternity. A man who has never been broken down by the sense of his sin and guilt here, nor has morally tasted the affliction of the belly of hell which he thinks he does not deserve, will have to taste it in a day when it is too late to escape its awful realities. I think you will easily see what I mean. Jonah's feelings, as described in this second chapter, are interesting in the extreme. They were the legitimate fruit of his own sin and wilfulness, but doubtless by them God prepared that man to give his message. " I went down to the bottoms of the mountains," he says (ver. 6). Three steps Jonah took in self-will, and the fourth God made him take.

Then he begins to pray and to promise, but that does not deliver him, and at length he justly says, " They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy " (vers. 8, 9). He was the illustration of his doctrine. Then he says, " I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving," but that does not save him. Then he adds, " I will pay that that I have vowed," but that does not save him. You too may say, I have prayed, promised, and vowed, but I am no better. God has waked me up, and since then I have never had any peace day or night. Thank God, my friend. Why am I thankful? Because, I believe that before any great time goes by, you will enjoy God's salvation. The man that has never known the misery never tastes the

mercy, but the man who cries to God in distress of soul is sure to be heard. Till a man knows he is lost, he never knows what it is to be saved, and that is the reason why many never know it. They do not think that they are lost, hence they never get saved.

But Jonah has to drop his vows. They do not take him out. Prayer does not take him out, and tears do not take him out of the belly of hell. You say, I will give up everything. That will not take *you* out. Though you gave all that you had for the salvation of your soul, that would not do. Look at Jonah again. There he is, closed up in the darkness, when all of a sudden he says, "Salvation is of the Lord," and, before he knows where he is, he is on dry ground. It is God only that can save you, my friend. Not your prayers or tears. Your prayers can no more save you than your sins. You must take the Saviour. Thank God, what you need you may have. That which you want as a sinner, the love of God has supplied in the Person of His Son. All connected with yourself is hopeless. And so it was with Jonah. But the moment he says, "Salvation is of the Lord," the Lord spake to the fish, and it "vomited out Jonah upon the *dry land*" (ver. 10). Not into the mud. Lots of folk get into the mud, I think. They are in uncertainty. They take up permanent quarters in "Doubting Castle." They go about with doubts and fears. What, then, is dry land? The sunny shores of resurrection, the knowledge of a risen Christ, a triumphant Saviour. Jonah was on dry land, everything speaking of deliverance and safety.

Now he is fitted for the message God has for him. "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that

great city, and preach unto it *the preaching that I bid thee*" (chap. iii. 1, 2). That is a great point for preachers. Get your orders from the top. People say to me sometimes, Why do you not preach this and that, and after this style, and that manner? Because I have got no orders, my friend. You have just to get your orders and to obey them, and I have to get mine. "Go and preach the preaching that I bid thee," says God. That is the great point for each servant. It is a great principle, and if we miss it our service is spoiled.

"So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey" (ver. 3). All that has come out in late years, as the result of the digging up of the ruins of Nineveh, proves absolutely the truth of Scripture here. "An exceeding great city of three days' journey" indicates its vast size. Apparently it must have covered an area of sixty miles square. It was a remarkable city also as to its defences. The walls were an hundred feet high, and three chariots could drive abreast on its ramparts. On these, too, were built some fifteen hundred towers, each two hundred feet high, rendering the advance of a foe easily seen on every quarter. It was a sort of impregnable place. And yet it has been so overwhelmed, that those who have sought to find out its site have had difficulty till very lately. God first sent the word of warning to Nineveh by the lips of Jonah. Perhaps, my friend, He is warning you by my lips. Heed His word.

And now we will go to that mighty city. "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey." He goes through one of the massive gates. God had

given him a message, that we might think would occupy him three days in delivery, but he goes only one day's journey. Why did he not go three days' journey? There was no need. If you get a work of God begun one end of the city, it will soon spread to the other end. Oh, how the tidings went like wild-fire through Nineveh. This weird man, with a resurrection light in his eye, enters that city, and when inside his voice is heard crying, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (ver. 4). What, Nineveh destroyed? Never was the like heard before. Never. And what heed did the Ninevites pay to this message of mingled mercy and judgment? Did they sneer? Did they treat that warning word like many a sinner in Edinburgh and elsewhere to-day treats the gospel? No, my friends. It is one of the most striking instances in all the Word of God, of men heeding God's message and bowing down before Him in true repentance.

I do not know whether Jonah went up one street and down another, but it was enough that once from the lips of God's servant, typically risen from the dead, fell this word of God, in resurrection power, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Why forty days? Oh, thank God, that He gave them forty days; He gave them space to repent. Had He said, "Ere the sun sets to-night, Nineveh shall be overthrown," they would not have had much time to repent. But those promised "forty days" were the breathings of mercy, rejoicing against judgment. God is never in a hurry to judge. He is slow in judgment, but always in haste to meet an anxious sinner. Luke xv. shows us that: of the prodigal we read: "And he arose, and came to his father. But

when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and *ran*, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (ver. 20). God is in a hurry to meet an anxious sinner, but He is very slow to judge this godless world.

If God had been in a hurry to judge man's sin, do you think the world would have lain so long stained with the murder of His Son? God has not drawn the sword of retributive judgment from the scabbard yet. He is full of mercy. "Yet *forty days*, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," was indeed the voice of mercy. It had its effect. And what do I read? "So the people of Nineveh believed *Jonah*?" No. "So the people of Nineveh *believed God*" (iii. 5). A most wonderful statement this. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, "They *repented* at the preaching of Jonas." Look at the people who hear this warning, this solemn word of God; what is the effect on their souls? Does it go in at the one ear and out at the other? By no means. I read this: "So the people of Nineveh believed God." The word was mixed with faith in them that heard it.

There are two unspeakably important effects of Jonah's short sermon in Nineveh. Faith and repentance. What was their faith? They believed God. Do you know what faith is? Faith is the soul's reception of a divine testimony, and repentance is the result in the soul of the reception of that testimony. Jonah's was a very solemn testimony. I am not here to-day to say, "Yet forty days, and Edinburgh shall be overthrown." I am not here to tell you that you have yet forty days in which to turn to God. No man in this hall can be sure of forty days, or forty hours, or even forty minutes. I can tell you that

you are a sinner in your sins, and I bring you the blessed tidings that where you are there is mercy, grace, and pardon for you through faith in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you believed the Word of God there would also be repentance, for repentance is the result of faith. Repentance is the tear-drop in the eye of faith.

Were these Ninevites told to repent? They were not. Manifestly, however, they repented. Though the word may not have been used by Jonah with regard to them, their whole course was altered when they got hold of the solemn fact that God was going to deal with them because of their sins. Have you, my friend, not heard this word?—"But now God commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts xvii. 30, 31). What was Jonah? Typically and personally a risen man. What is Jesus now? A risen Man. And what do we therefore read now? God commands all men everywhere to repent. Why? Because the day of judgment is appointed, and the Judge ordained, even the One who died and rose again. Nineveh had forty days in which to repent. It seems to have repented the very first day. Faith sprang up at once in their hearts, and they did repent. Our Lord says, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because *they repented* at the preaching of Jonas." Tell me this, Have you repented yet?

That they repented was manifest. We read, "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed

a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them" (ver. 5). Sackcloth is the Old Testament expression of repentance. Where did it begin? You know it is very difficult to get the gospel brought to the throne nowadays. The remarkable thing in Nineveh was this, it began at the top and came down. The word somehow reached the King of Nineveh, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." He and all other subordinate hearers were so impressed that they repented. Why, sinner, is it you are not impressed? Why, with the knowledge that judgment is certain, the end of things drawing near, do you not repent? Another hour and everything may be over for ever. The Lord may have come, His Church have been called to glory, and the world left to the desolating judgments which God has assured it are coming, and which the denizens thereof have richly earned.

Why have you not turned to the Lord? The Ninevites listened, believed, and repented. Imitate them. Even their king repented. I think I see that proud man bowed down before God. The King of Assyria was the ruling power on earth at that moment. The mightiest monarch on the earth bows down before God. Wise man! Look at him. "For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth and sat in ashes" (ver. 6). He seems to say, "What avails my kingly robe if the judgment of God is upon me, and if in forty days I am a corpse?" Wise man, sensible man, humbled man, repentant man. Why? Because believing man.

Now note the next thing he did. "And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh

by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything: let them not feed nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands" (vers. 7, 8). The life was to be changed. Mind that. When a man gets converted, his life is always altered afterwards. What he has been in he comes out of. He shuns sin, and loves holiness.

The king further says very pathetically, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not" (ver. 9). What he felt was this—We are bound to perish if we go on as we are doing, but, if we repent, perhaps God will turn and repent, and we may be spared and perish not. Now, beloved friend, have you any doubt on that point? Did you never hear this, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"? (John iii. 16). I do not think that there rose in the King of Nineveh's soul the thought of everlasting life, but was there any possibility of escaping the solemn doom of which God had warned him, and with which He had threatened him. He saw one doorway. And what was that? Repentance. So he covered himself with sackcloth, sat in ashes, and cried mightily to God.

And now let us go into Nineveh. What do we find? The king robed in sackcloth, and sitting in ashes. What would the men of the world have said to this? They would have thought little of it. Observe what the Lord Jesus Christ says of their action, "The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this

generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas;" yes, they believed and repented. Again I ask you, Have you repented? Have you been brought down? Has there ever come a moment in your soul's history when you have put on moral sackcloth? Have you ever been like Job, as he says: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job xlii. 5, 6). Job and the Ninevites occupied the same ground morally.

Had you gone into Nineveh at that moment, what would you have heard? The lowing of the cattle, saying, "Oh, lead us to water." But no man led them. And the sheep bleating to be led out to grass. But no man led them. There was an awful quiet over the men of that city, broken only by the voice of prayer. They were under the sense of the impending judgment of God. Oh that sinners might be seen now in a similar state, bowed down and repentant before God. It was an amazing sight. Nothing like it was ever known before, or since, that I know of. And yet what we see in Nineveh is just what goes on in the history of every soul of man, when that man is first awakened, and is about to be blessed of God. He gets the knowledge and the sense of sin. He is brought to repentance, even though he perhaps does not understand fully what the meaning of the word is. What does it mean? It means something very precious. The apostle Paul says, "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts xx. 21). These are the two vital things which always go together. "So the

people of Nineveh believed God." There was faith. How was it evinced? They "proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them" (ver. 5). There was repentance. Friend, do you believe God? If you do, you will bow down in repentance before Him, and you will get blessing. "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," are the sure precursors of deep soul-blessing.

But you may ask this question, What is faith? It is believing God. It is taking God at His word. That is what an old woman said in the early hours of the morning when she was dying. She had been a professing Christian, and her friends sent for her minister. When he came in he said: "Well, my good friend, I see you are very ill. What are you resting on for eternity?" With gasping utterance she feebly replied, "Sir, I have taken God at His word." That was faith. Have you taken God at His word? To do so is to show that you are the possessor of divinely produced faith. I repeat—Faith is the soul's reception of a divine testimony. "He that hath received his testimony *hath set to his seal* that God is true" (John iii. 33). That verse is a divine definition of faith. I think the little girl at the Canongate Sunday school had got hold of it very clearly. The question was asked, "What is faith?" Her answer was this, "It is believing what God says in the Bible about Jesus, and asking no questions."

Take God at His word. He always speaks the truth. Men can tell lies, for "they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies" (Ps. lviii. 3). But God is true, and always speaks the truth, though He is not the Truth. What is the Truth? Christ. The truth

is the absolute and perfect expression of that which is. Christ is that. God is love. God is gracious, holy, tender, and merciful. How do I know it? Because it has all come out to man in the Person of the Son of God, for He was the Truth. To have "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" is to credit Him with being what He says He is. Abraham illustrates this. We read that "Abraham believed God." God showed him the stars, and said, "So shall thy seed be." Abraham took Him at His word, and was a justified man on the spot.

Friend, why cannot you believe God? You tell me that you find it so difficult to believe Him. Why do you find it difficult to believe? I meet you to-morrow, going to the station. "Where are you going?" I ask. "I am going to London by the two o'clock train." "How do you know it is at two o'clock?" "I bought a Bradshaw's time-table." "And are you actually going to believe Bradshaw?" "Well, I am not such a fool as to go at ten minutes past two, when the time-table says two o'clock." This is passing strange. You can absolutely believe Bradshaw regarding a two o'clock train, and you cannot believe God for eternal life, "which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Tit. i. 2). It shows what a heart you have. You can believe fallible man, and you cannot believe Him of whom it is written that it is "impossible for God to lie" (Heb. vi. 18).

Friend, God makes no mistakes in His Word. There are no mistakes in Scripture. I know that some of our wise men say there are mistakes therein. Not so; the mistakes are all in the hearts and heads of these writers and speakers. You make a great mistake by not believing God simply when He addresses you as He

does now in grace. "So the people of Nineveh believed God" is a striking record. And will not you believe God? Do you remember what Paul says about believing God, when passing through a great storm? "There stood by me this night the angel of God, *whose I am*, and *whom I serve*, saying, Fear not, Paul: thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for *I believe God*, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts xxvii. 23-25). That was faith.

Now then, my friend, if you also believe God, you will get saved where you sit to-night. Believe Him where you are this night. Believe His love. Believe His grace. Believe in the mercy of His heart. Do not forget this, it is not your repentance that leads God to goodness, but "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. ii. 4).

The King of Nineveh said, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" (ver. 9). You and I cannot say, "Who can tell?" God's Son has come and told us. His Son has come down and told us all the truth—that He loves mercy and not sacrifice. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John iv. 14). "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John iii. 17). God has told out His heart, He has given from His bosom His best Beloved—the best thing in heaven for the worst thing on earth. And what is that? It is a sinner in his sins. Yes, Jesus has given Himself for us. The love of God is declared, and now, as much for us as for Jonah or Nineveh in days gone by, we have

to learn the blessed fact that "salvation is of the Lord."

Blessing comes truly from God without money and without price. A little boy came up to me once in the Waverley Station, and said, "This month's Murray, sir?" offering me a well-known railway guide book. "How much is it?" "Threepence." "I thought you were going to give it to me for nothing." "Oh, no, sir," said he, "there's nothing for nothing in this world." "Are you sure there's nothing for nothing, my little man?" I shall never forget how he blushed up, and said, "Something." "What is it?" "If you please, sir, salvation and the Lord Jesus." "That is right; how long since you found that out?" "Almost six months; the Lord saved me at one of Mr Moody's meetings," was his happy reply.

There are two reasons why you can only get salvation as a gift. God is too rich to sell it, and you are far too poor to buy it. How then can you get it? Receive it as God's free gift. Do you want salvation? God will give it to you. Can you buy it? Never. Do you deserve it? Oh, no. How can I get it? By simply taking it. If you are bowed down and repentant before God, you will get it. Repentance is the result in my soul of the reception of God's testimony. I am crushed by the sense of my sin and His goodness. It is not, however, a pair of steps by which I can go up to the platform of salvation. Repentance is the divine movement in the soul that follows in the footsteps of faith. If your soul were moved and bowed with the sense of your sin on the one hand, and on the other your heart were melted by the love of the Son of God who died on Calvary for your sins, and there bore the judgment of God due to you, and your tears fell

fast, would all this wash away your sins? No. But once see that Jesus' precious blood washes away all your sins, and then your tears of gratitude may flow freely, because you can say, like the apostle, "The Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

I press this question of repentance, for it has a big place in Scripture. John the Baptist cried through the land, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii. 2). Men were mightily moved, and the devil quickly got Herod to put him in prison, and then cut his head off. Depend upon it, Satan rejoiced to get rid of that man. Just then John's Master appeared on the scene, and immediately His voice is heard. Hear what the Master has to say. The murdered man cannot say more, but his divine Master reiterates his cry. Almost His first word is, "*Repent*: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iv. 17). God is about to assert His rights. What is the next thing? The Lord Jesus selected twelve men, "And they went out, and preached that men should *repent*" (Mark vi. 12). I find the Lord Jesus Himself saying presently, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to *repentance*" (Mark ii. 17). By-and-by they come and tell Him of certain people on whom a wall fell, and He says, "Except ye *repent*, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke xiii. 5). Later He takes us down to the very depths of hell to hear the prayer of a formerly rich man, and what does he say? "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Abraham says: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from

the dead, they will *repent*" (Luke xvi. 27-30). Even the damned in hell know that there must be repentance.

Further, when Christ rose from the dead, do you know what He said? "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that *repentance* and *remission of sins* should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke xxiv. 46, 47). Repentance and remission of sins always go together. If a man hears the Word of God and believes it, he is brought to repentance. And what is the next thing? There is faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, and immediately there is remission of sins? When Peter preached in the second of Acts, what said he? To those men thoroughly aroused, wakened up, and pricked to the heart, he exclaimed, "*Repent*, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the *remission of sins*, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (ver. 38). When you come to the next chapter, he says, "*Repent* ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (chap. iii. 19). Further on we find him saying, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give *repentance* to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (chap. v. 31).

Repentance is the fruit of God's goodness, with the view that you may know your sins forgiven, and your soul saved, just where you are. If we pass along in the Acts we find the same thing. I have already quoted to-night, "God now commandeth all men everywhere *to repent*: Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath

given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead " (chap. xvii. 30 and 31). What do I learn there? The judgment day is fixed, and the judge appointed. Solemn consideration for every unsaved hearer. When will it be? I do not know. It may be to-morrow. To-night may find the Church rapt to glory, and to-morrow you will find the great Assize has come. And what about the man that is judged? He can only be damned. My friend, you repent to-night and get blessing.

"Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," were largely preached by the apostle Paul. When telling the story of his conversion to King Agrippa, he says: "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judæa, and then to the Gentiles, that they should *repent* and turn to God, and do works *meet for repentance*" (Acts xxvi. 19, 20). This thought goes all through Scripture. It is very simple. I get the light of the testimony of God, I believe it, and then judge myself and my ways, and lead a new life. I hear of a testimony with regard to judgment. I bow to it. It may be, on the other hand, testimony as to the work of Christ. I bow to it. And as I bow I see my need: I believe the love that seeks my blessing, and I judge myself. The prodigal son was brought to repentance. He says, I am perishing, and there is goodness in the heart of my father. How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough to spare, and I perish with hunger. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee," that is confession, "and am

no more worthy to be called thy son," that is repentance. He judges himself. That causes joy in heaven, for when man *repents* heaven *rejoices*.

Now the Ninevites very wisely repented at the preaching of Jonah. And what was the result? They were blessed; they were spared. "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not" (Jonah iii. 10). Our blessed Lord says, "They repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." If these men repented at the preaching of this risen man who brought the Word of God to them, my friend, what shall be the effect on you that hear of Jesus, God's only Son, who has died for sinners such as you? He went into death that He might redeem us to God. And now he is risen from the dead the triumphant Victor. Tell me, will you not believe in Him who is greater than Jonas? Will you not turn to the Lord to-night? Say in your heart now, "Christ for me; I see that I am a lost, ruined sinner, but 'Salvation is of the Lord,' and if it is for the sinner, I will have it."

Simply take him as your Saviour to-night, and then go on your way and witness for Christ.

CHAPTER X.

SATAN'S FORTY DAYS.

TEMPTATION AND DEFEAT; OR, THE STRONG MAN BOUND AND HIS PALACE SPOILED.

(MARK i. 12, 13; MATTHEW iii. 16, 17, iv. 1-11, 23-25;
LUKE iv. 1-15.)

I HAVE read the threefold account, which God has been pleased to give us, of the temptation of the Lord Jesus, because, beloved friends, we get in each Gospel some point that is very noticeable, but which the other Evangelists do not record. Matthew gives you the historical sequence of the temptation, while Luke gives you the moral order of events.

When we think who it was who was tempted, it well becomes us, with unshod feet, to tread this ground, and with circumcised ear to listen to what God says to us. We have the history here of a Man, a true real Man, vigorously assaulted by the foe of God, as it says: "Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered" (Luke iv. 2). He was forty days and forty nights without food, and then, as you might expect, He was hungry. Then the tempter came, man's tempter, your tempter, my tempter, in that day the tempter of the Lord Jesus. I do not

doubt Satan came thinking that he would do with this Man as he had done with the first man he tempted, that is, upset him to his ruin.

We all know that the first man was absolutely conquered, and it is a great thing for you and me to see that we belong to a conquered stock, a conquered race, a stock that has been overcome by the power of the tempter. The first man, I repeat, was absolutely conquered and ruined by the tempter. Here is another Man, the second Man, the last Adam. Why the last? There is no other to come. There are only the first and the last. The first was the parent of the family to which you and I by nature belong. The second Man, the Lord out of heaven, the last Adam here comes before us in all the blessed moral perfection that was His as a dependent and obedient Man; and God permits us to see the victory of Christ, and the downright and complete rout of the devil in the wilderness.

This is grand hearing for sinners, grand hearing for saints, yea, grand tidings for men and women like you and me, who belong to the first man, children of that Adam who was unable to cope with a foe like Satan. We are permitted to see Jesus, before He comes out into this world to begin His lovely ministry, defeat the enemy absolutely. This is indeed a blessed sight for us, but that is the way the Spirit of God introduces the Lord here, ere He commences His public ministry. The one who had ruined the first man and reduced the earth to misery through sin, to start with, and then brought in corruption and violence, here assumes to put his hand on this blessed, holy Man, but it was only to be defeated absolutely. And mind you the devil tempted Christ just like he tempts you and me. That is, he took Him up on the very point where he thought

He was weakest. If Jesus were an hungered—and there was nothing wrong in His being hungry—the question is raised of how to get Himself bread to meet His hunger. But you will see that He defeats the devil by obedience to and dependence on God. And, beloved friend, there is no other way of victory for you or for me but by being in the same path as the Lord Jesus.

But, first of all, see how the Lord is introduced here. He comes out into notice after His baptism by John. Observe what takes place as He is baptized. The Gospel of Luke adds this particular, that He was praying (chap. iii. 21). He was a dependent Man. When baptized He comes up out of the water and the heavens are opened. There are four occasions where you find them opened in the New Testament. They are opened here for God to look down to earth to see a Man in whom He could completely delight. Next they are opened when Stephen looks up and sees that same Man glorified in heaven (Acts vii. 56). The next time is when Peter saw them opened and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth, and received up again into heaven. He saw all sorts of four-footed beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air in it (Acts x. 11, 12). What is the meaning of that? Nothing goes into heaven but what comes out of it. How am I to get there? That is a serious question. If there be not the work of God in my soul and yours, let us not dream of heaven. That is the lesson I get in Acts x.

And where is the last time the heavens are opened? They have not been opened as yet, but they are going to be opened for the fourth time (see Rev. xix.

11, &c.), for this blessed Man to come out and take possession of all things, to which He has right and title on the ground of what He was personally as the Son of man, and also on the ground of redemption; for He has earned it, as Man, by going into death. He is going to take in this way His world-kingdoms, which the devil proposed in the wilderness to give Him without treading the pathway of suffering, but at the expense of the truth, at the expense of the homage that was due to God, and which the devil has always sought to have rendered to himself. Do you know what took place there? The Lord refused Satan's way at the cost of His life, blessed be His name. He went to death, but that death has delivered us who believe, and enabled Him to associate us with Himself. Thank God, what He refused from the devil's hand that day, is what He is going to come out of heaven for by-and-by, and we shall be with Him in the day of His glory. Ah, friends, there is a grand day coming for the world when Christ gets His rights.

But now, look again at this scene on Jordan's banks. The heavens are opened here, and the Father says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17). For thirty years He had been in retirement at Nazareth, and men had seen nothing of Him. As a child of twelve He was up at Jerusalem and was found in the temple, "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions" (Luke ii. 46). Then for eighteen years God drops a veil upon His life. All we know of that period is this, that when He came out men said, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" (Mark vi. 3). So I conclude that this blessed Son of God, here in

human form on earth, wrought with His hands. Let not any one think then that service or toil is a menial thing to be shunned. Toil has been ennobled by the pathway of Christ, even as the grave has been sanctified by the fact that He has gone into it. Ah, beloved friends, wonderful indeed is the pathway of Christ.

And now the thirty years are over, and He comes out. The Father's heart is delighted then to say, as the Spirit of God, descending like a dove, lights upon Him, "This is my beloved Son." In Noah's day the dove went out of the ark but came back because it could not find a resting-place. For four thousand years the Spirit of God had been looking all over the earth to find a sinless man, a man suited to God's heart in every respect, but every man was sinful. No resting-place was found. At length there comes a Man upon whom this Holy Spirit can descend and *abide* (John i. 32). There is the resting-place the Spirit of God has found, a man suited to God in every spring of His being, every thought of His heart, every act of His life. He came into this world to do the will of God. And you will see how in doing God's will He is preserved, when the enemy comes to Him.

What a joy must it have been to Him to hear the Father's voice saying, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (Luke iii. 22). Notice this. People are sometimes troubled about the Trinity. You have it here. "The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him." Then "a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." There you have the Son, a real, true Man, before your eye. A Man

whose only thought was to do the will of God. Beloved friend, have you any doubt about the Trinity? If you have, you will never make progress in your soul as to God's truth. It is not that I find the word in Scripture, but I find the thing. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost are each before us in this scene. The Son was come here to make the Father known. And moreover, in the power of the Spirit, He was come to do the work by which man is delivered, as well as Satan absolutely defeated.

Are you not yet clear about the Trinity. It is vital to have the sense of what the Trinity involves, and to rejoice in it. Christ is the revealer of the Father's love. He became incarnate that He might reveal God, redeem man, and absolutely crush and break the power of the enemy. And I want you, my friends, to see that the Man who adorns the throne of God to-night has defeated Satan. I quite admit He has not taken sin out of the world yet, and the devil has power yet over men's minds, but the title to everything is in the hand of Christ. He met Satan in the wilderness and defeated him morally. Then on the cross, and in His death He utterly destroyed his power. And now redemption is accomplished, and Christ is risen, and the consequence is that if you have come into this hall to-night in your sins and in misery, you may go out with the sense that your sins are gone, because the Lord Jesus, when upon the cross, bore the sins of sinners, that He might put them away for ever. And if He has not put them away, He never can do it, and He never will do it. Why? He will not die again. Then you say, What am I to understand? That a work has been done by this blessed Man

that enables God to let you know your sins are blotted out. And if you get hold of the truth of redemption as revealed in the cross, you will go on your way, beloved friend, with your heart attached to Christ, and you will seek to do, in your pathway, what He did perfectly in His pathway—the will of God.

I love to hear that voice, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Perhaps some of you say, Why do we not here get the word "hear him," as on the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew xvii.? It seems to me that at this part of Christ's life man is being tested, and further, it goes without saying, that everybody ought to hear Him. Should not you hear Him if He be God's Son? I appeal to you from the oldest to the youngest in this hall to-night, ought we not to listen to Him without being told? Yes. And that is the point. At this stage, therefore, the word "hear him" is absent. When we come to Matthew xvii. Peter is bungling sadly when he says, "Let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias" (ver. 4). Moses the Law-giver, Elijah the Reformer, and Jesus, the Son of God, he put on a common level. The Father could not stand that. He swept Moses and Elijah off the scene as a cloud overshadows them, while the Father's voice is heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; *hear ye him*" (ver. 5).

This is the day of Jesus. Moses' day has gone by, and so has Elijah's. This is Jesus' day; hear Him. I have heard Him. Have you? I am not going to ask you to come to Christ to-night. But if I can so preach Christ that the effect is that your heart is attracted to Christ, then you will go down that lobby

saying, By the grace of God, Christ for me from this night forth. Oh, cling to Him, trust Him, the blessed One who has charmed the heart of God, and defeated the enemy.

Well now, we read, "And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil" (Luke iv. 1, 2). Now look at the difference between the temptation of Christ, and the temptation of Adam and Eve. They were in Paradise, with everything at their hand that the goodness of God could surround them with, and there they fell. When I come to the Lord Jesus, He is not in Paradise, but in the wilderness, with everything against Him. He is there for forty days.

What a wonderful forty days we see here—the most wonderful forty days that we have in Scripture, at least so far. If Moses went up to the mountain-top, what was it for? To spend "forty days" with God. If Elijah went forty days in the strength of divinely provided food, it was to meet God in the end, and to have wonderful communications from God. Here I find One who had always walked with God, and is now led by the Holy Ghost. He is taken into the wilderness to have forty days of conflict with Satan. This touching and wonderful scene is not recorded in exactly the same words in each scripture. Luke says, "Being forty days tempted of the devil." We are not told what the character of that continued temptation was, but the three instances that are named here suffice. The character of the temptation that the blessed Lord sustained at the hand of the enemy during the forty days would seem to have a veil flung over it by God's own hand, but the final assault of the

enemy is fully recorded for our profit and encouragement.

After the forty days were ended, Jesus was hungry. Then came the tempter, with four thousand years of experience of how to tempt man. He knows our weak spot. Oh yes. Down in the bottom of every heart there is a little bit of lust after something. To that the devil appeals. Satan knows exactly how to tempt every one of us. With one man it is love of money; with another some fleshly lust, perhaps a glass of whisky. Another man he knows is upon the very verge of a moral precipice, and he will present a lure and drag him over. Satan knows the weak points of every Christian too. I do not think he exactly tempts sinners, but he knows how to work for their downfall. He does tempt the children of God because he knows they have escaped his grip. Unbelieving sinners he effectually controls, for of such it is written: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them" (2 Cor. iv. 4). So he leads them on to destruction.

And now, look well at Christ, hungry, and note how the enemy assails Him. "And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread" (ver. 3). There are two ways in which you may look at that word "if." Casting a doubt on His relationship to God, or getting Him to act on the fact of that relationship. I think the audacity of Satan is sometimes surprising. He says to Jesus, "If thou be the Son of God." That too is the way in which he will seek to upset you. He will with you raise the question whether after all

you are a child of God. To the Lord he says here, "If you are really God's Son, command this stone that it be made bread." That is, God has kept you hungry, now then, your opportunity has arrived, take yourself out of God's hand, for you are able to make those stones into bread, and satisfy yourself. No miracle apparently had been wrought by the Lord Jesus up till this moment, but Satan had a true idea of who He was. He sought to upset this blessed One, and to trip Him up in the most plausible way possible.

There is no sin in hunger. It is incidental to man as he passes through this scene. If the Son of God become a Man, and enter into the world where men are, He must at least expose Himself to the vicissitudes of human life. Well, He was hungry. "And now, help yourself," was Satan's suggestion. Oh, hear what Jesus says. He had said before, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Ps. xl. 7, 8). He was only here to do God's will, hence when Satan says to him, "Command this stone that it be made bread," His answer is very beautiful—"It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (ver. 4). Notice, dear friends, the Lord Jesus not merely quotes Scripture, but He quotes it *as* Scripture. Mark what He says. He does not merely say, "Man shall not live by bread alone," but "It is written." He had the most profound respect for what God had written. I should like you to notice that, dear friends, because we live in a day when people say the books of Moses are not to be received. They are just human compositions. Know you this, that the answer with which Christ overcame the devil was

quoted from one of these books? The first quotation is from the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, and the other two instances named here are from the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy. Christ puts His emphatic stamp upon Moses' writings over and over again, affirming their authenticity, and that they were God's word.

And now you be warned, you young men, for to-day the devil is busy casting doubts on Scripture. Some people say the Word of God is not to be relied upon. Look at this blessed One, He should know its value and reliability. All that He ever was He brought into manhood. He was the incarnate Son of God, and therefore, as God, He knew perfectly what was and was not Scripture. He takes the place of dependence, and then He quotes that striking verse which Moses uttered to the children of Israel: "That he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (Deut. viii. 3). The devil meets Jesus in the wilderness where Israel had been, and he tempts Him, as he tempted them. His resource is Scripture, the sword of the Spirit, God's Word. He hangs on God's Word. He is here the truly obedient, as well as the absolutely dependent One, and Satan is foiled. How are you and I to meet Satan? Exactly the same way.

We will now pass to the second temptation which Matthew gives. Satan is very wise. He is very crafty. If you foil the enemy once by dependence upon God he will still come back to you. If he does not get in at the front door, he will come again and try to enter by the back door. And what will he come with next time? Very likely a text, since he

finds that you believe in Scripture. So is it here. "Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down" (again notice the "if"): "for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone" (vers. 5, 6). This mangled quotation is taken from the 91st Psalm, which describes our Lord's pathway as the Messiah. Turn back to it for a moment. See how it starts. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (ver. 1). It is an oracular description of what Christ would be as Messiah upon earth. He then speaks: "I will say of Jehovah, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust" (ver. 2), and indeed Jehovah was His refuge. The Spirit then addresses Messiah thus: "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence" (ver. 3). If I might so say, here, in this wilderness episode, is the fowler seen spreading a snare.

Further down in the Psalm we read, "Because thou hast made Jehovah which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling" (vers. 9, 10). And now observe those words: "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee *in all thy ways*. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (vers. 11, 12). Satan did not quote the whole of the verse. He left out those four words "*in all thy ways*." Ah, how crafty is the enemy. To the blessed Lord

he as it were suggests : "The scripture is plain that that promise applies to You. Now is Your opportunity to show that it does apply to You." He suggests to Him that He should fling Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and thus He would prove that the scripture had its application to Him, and thus make Himself an object of great interest to men.

It is, however, never the way of a saint to put God to the test ; so the Lord Jesus says, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," quoting this time Deuteronomy vi. 16. Do I need to put God to the test to know that He loves and cares for me? No. And there is the whole point of this temptation of the Lord. If Satan suggest this text to Him, boldly mis-quoting Scripture, His blessed dependence upon God preserves Him, as He says, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." I do not need to put God to the proof.

I do not doubt Satan thought He had got a very strong point here with the blessed Lord, but when the heart is right it is always kept. There was nothing in His heart but a desire to do the will of God, and He was maintained in the most beautiful, perfect trust in God. He says in effect, "There is no need for me to put Him to the test." Blessed, perfect, holy Man, He knew the heart of God. He knew the love of God. He trusted in God. And what was the result at that moment? He is preserved from the snare of the fowler, and the enemy is utterly beaten. And that is the only way you and I can beat the enemy, by confidence in God and the humble use of Scripture, which then becomes the sword of the Spirit, by which the foe of our souls is driven off.

But now there is a third attack recorded. If you

have beaten Satan twice, he will come again. A third time he comes to the Lord. "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (vers. 8, 9). How many a man has fallen down and worshipped Satan for a very little. Have you not noticed that? The god of this world easily deludes men. But here, what was it? Satan proposes to Christ, as he shows Him the kingdoms of the world, in a moment of time, and the glory of them, to give them to Him if He will fall down and worship him. You know that men like glory, power, and authority. Christ, however, is the only One who is worthy of these; hence in the Book of Revelation, they are, in the songs thereof, ascribed to Him alone. All that men set so much stress upon, but which they generally use to their own self-exaltation, heaven's voice, by-and-by, is heard in one blessed note, one universal strain, ascribing to Jesus, as they say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. v. 12). That is to say, other men's hands have held those things and abused them; but finally the universal judgment is that there is but one hand worthy of holding the sceptre of power, and it is the hand of the Man that first overcame Satan in the wilderness, and then was nailed to the cross to atone for sin and save sinners. It is our joy to anticipate that day and say now that His is the only hand that is worthy to hold the sceptre of authority and power.

But look at the craft of the enemy as he endeavours

to turn the Lord aside. He seeks to get for himself that which is due to God, the Creator. Satan is a creature, but here he seeks to get for himself what belongs to God alone. Each temptation reveals some peculiar beauty in Jesus. In plain language, if I get *obedience* evinced in the first temptation, and *dependence* marking the second, it seems to me in the third that you get the most beautiful unfolding of the *fidelity* of His heart to God. Man is to worship God alone, therefore He says, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (ver. 10). And what does Satan do? He leaves Him. Observe this, he is overcome; he is foiled; he is defeated.

It is important to notice the different order of the three temptations as recorded by Matthew and Luke. As I have already said, Matthew gives us the historical, and Luke the moral order. The historical order shows that when the Lord bids Satan depart he *obeys* His word and leaves Him. As Luke presents this wondrous scene, however, the temptation on the mountain top comes second, and, as it now reads, in our ordinary English Bible, has this ugly appearance, that Satan stood his ground and did *not go* when so bidden of the Lord. This is not the case, and you should know, if you do not already possess the information, that what the Spirit of God records by the pen of Luke in verse 8 of his third chapter is this, "And Jesus answered and said unto him, It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Carefully observe that the words "Get thee behind me, Satan," are *not* there. Evidently in copying the ancient manuscripts some scribe judged that the

previous copyist had omitted in Luke the words, "Get thee hence, Satan," which do occur rightly in Matthew iii. 10. This supposed error was sought to be corrected by the careless insertion of the words, "Get thee behind me, Satan," which occur in Matthew xvi. 23, and are addressed to Peter. Having thus crept into the text, they remained, and are found in our otherwise very correct English version of the Scriptures. Read the passage, however, as God wrote it by Luke, and all is comely, for no command is given to Satan to depart, and the following temptation comes in its moral order, void of the ugly appearance I have indicated.

But you may ask—What do you mean by moral order? I mean the order in which Satan's temptations usually reach us, as they reached Eve at first, and all the world since. It is written, "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food" (the lust of the flesh), "and that it was pleasant to the eyes" (the lust of the eye), "and a tree to be desired to make one wise" (the pride of life), "she took of the fruit thereof and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat" (Gen. iii. 6). The order here is akin to Luke's account of the Lord's temptations, and exactly what the Spirit of God elsewhere thus describes: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John ii. 16). Poor world! Its composition is after all only twofold, lust and pride. *Lust* is seeking what I do not possess, *pride* is self-exaltation on account of what I do possess. These principles form and actuate the world—away from God.

Now in Jesus there was nothing of this, so when

Satan sought to move Him in regard to the bread, which in us would appeal to "the lust of the flesh," he was foiled. Again, "the lust of the eyes" He was absolutely free from, and though He sees the kingdoms of the earth they attract Him not. Further, to fling Himself from the temple parapet, be unhurt, and become an object of admiration and interest, presented no charm to Him, for "the pride of life," which might easily lead us to act on similar lines, had no place in His being. Blessed, perfect, lowly, dependent, obedient Man that He was, to do God's will was His meat and drink, and in doing it He escaped the fowler's snare, and utterly defeated the enemy of God and man. May we all remember that "the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John ii. 17).

Jesus is seen here as the moral Conqueror of that malign being who has upset every man but Himself. By dependence and obedience He has, however, utterly defeated and routed him. When Jesus at length at the end of the forty days' temptation said, "Get thee hence, Satan," he obeyed and departed from Him. Ah, but that is Christ, you say. Yes. But do not you forget this scripture, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. iv. 7). Christian, get hold of this, Satan is a beaten and defeated foe. You and I could not overcome him, but the Lord did, and He shares His victory with us.

And now we read, "And, behold, angels came and ministered unto him" (Matt. iv. 11). To me there is a great charm about this. That wilderness scene angels had watched with the deepest interest. They had seen a Man that would not relieve Himself at the expense of the character of God; and when the testing

time was fully over and Satan utterly routed, angels came and ministered to Him. I do not know what they brought in their hands, but they ministered to Him. Oh yes, but that was Christ, you again say. True, but do not forget that we read of angels, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. i. 14). I think, beloved friends, we have little idea of how much we are the objects of angelic ministry.

Have you ever noticed how they figure in the Gospels in relation to Christ? They predict His incarnation (Luke i. 30-33). They come and tell of His birth (Luke ii. 9-12). In the moment of His victory over Satan, angels have the pleasure of bringing to Him that which suited Him at that moment (Mark i. 13). He is strengthened by them in the hour of His deepest sorrow in Gethsemane (Luke xxii. 43). They roll back the stone from the door of His tomb, sit thereon, and then announce His resurrection (Matt. xxviii. 2; John xx. 12). And when He comes again to earth they will be His happy attendants (Matt. xvi. 27; 2 Thess. i. 7).

Let me now say one word to you, in passing, with regard to Satan. I hear some say that Satan is not a person. I do not believe in the personality of Satan, you say. Perhaps you do not. But you forget this, that the very thing that would delight him best of all is that you should not believe in him. If you believed in him you would be afraid of him. I will ask you a question: Do you believe in the personality of Christ? Oh yes, of course I do; Christ is the Son of God, and the Saviour. And you hope to be saved by Him? Yes. What kind of a Christ must you have to save you? He must be a sinless man, that is certain. I agree

with you. Now, let me ask you another question. What is Satan, then, if he have no personality? Do you reply, as many others to-day—Satan is the proclivity to evil which is found in man's heart. That is plain, at least. Satan is not a being who can trip men up? No! Satan, forsooth, is the tendency to evil in man's own heart. Now, then, you tell me you must have a perfect Saviour. True, but I want you to notice that if you get rid of a personal devil, you get rid at the same time of a personal Saviour. They both go together. How is that?

You tell me that the devil is only the proclivity in a man's heart to evil. There will be sin coupled with that. I read that Christ was tempted of the devil. Had He any proclivities to evil? Oh no, you exclaim. How, then, was He tempted of the devil? If Christ was tempted of the devil, and the devil be the proclivity to evil in a man's own heart, then He must have had such, for Scripture affirms that He was tempted of the devil. Do you see, my friend, where you are? You have a Christ before your mind with proclivities to evil in His heart. If that were true He would not be perfect, and He would not be a truly holy man. God forgive me for saying the words. But I am only showing you where your false and hell-born ideas as to Satan are taking you. Their issue is the complete destruction of Christ as a possible Saviour, because He must have a fallen nature to have proclivities to evil in His heart—since out of it are the issues of life. That man cannot save me who has such a nature. A Christ with any proclivities to evil in His heart could not meet my case nor yours. No, my friend, by your casuistry and infidelity you have swept the devil and Christ off the scene together, and you have left your-

self where you are, a sinner in your sins, and on your road to hell, and when you get there you will find that there is a devil, who will be your companion for eternity.

But further, I press on you that there is a Christ, whom, if you go on in your present sad and awful condition, you will never meet but once, and that to get at His hands the judgment you have earned. Ah, my friends, you may say, I do not believe in judgment. Satan is clever enough to keep you from believing that too. There are plenty of men who say, "Did God prepare hell for men?" No, He did not. "And did God prepare eternal fire for men?" No. The Lord Jesus will yet say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, *prepared for the devil* and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41). But do you not see, that if you will not have the company of God's Man for eternity, you must have the company of God's foe for eternity? If you are not going to spend it with Christ, through faith in His blood, and through faith in His name, if you are not going to spend it with the One who defeated the devil, and the One who loves to deliver and save you, you will spend it with the one who has deceived you. The first and last acts of Satan are identical—deceiving men. (See 1 Tim. ii. 14; Rev. xx. 3, 8-10.) My friend, better far wake up to the truth now. Better far take your place as a poor, good-for-nothing, ruined, undone sinner, and let this blessed Son of God, this Man who is the Victor over Satan, bless and save you. How will He do it? Follow His history, and you will soon learn.

I find now in the end of the fourth chapter of Matthew that Satan being overcome, Christ comes out to bless and deliver man: "And Jesus went about all

Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (ver. 23). In plain language, He fulfils that striking verse found in Luke's Gospel. There the Lord Jesus says, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoil" (Luke xi. 21, 22). And what is the meaning of that? Satan is the strong man, and he is armed with everything that can encircle and hold his vassal—man. This strong man keeps his palace. His armour is the knowledge he has of the weakness of man, a weapon which he has well learned to use in upsetting and overcoming man. His palace is the world. His goods are sinners. And while he holds them thus, they are in peace. You were never in anxiety about your soul? Never. You have been in peace all your days. You do not believe in Satan. Not you. You are just an illustration of the truth.

Well, who is the stronger Man? This blessed One I have been telling you of. He overcame Satan, and bound him morally in the wilderness. He took all his armour from him. Christ has gone into the devil's camp of set purpose, hence we read, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8). He has come here to refute the devil's lie that God did not love men. God is love, and He has given His own Son to death for us, at a great cost.

When the devil left Christ in the wilderness, we are told by Luke that it was "for a season" (chap. iv. 13). Another time Satan crossed His path in the garden

of Gethsemane. Regarding that attack the blessed Lord said to His disciples, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John xiv. 30). He had met Him once before, and been defeated by Him. But, unabashed, he came to Him again in the garden. Then he evidently pressed on Him the awful consequences of His pathway if He would go on, even death. What was Christ's action? We read, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from (or out of) death, and was heard in that he feared" (Heb. v. 7). His agony was so deep then, that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke xxii.).

Doubtless Satan then suggested to Him to pause and not drink that cup, for it would cost Him His life, and the forsaking of God. He looked into the cup and measured its contents. It was all God's judgment against sin. If He drank it He must be forsaken of God, and be cast off, upon the cross. Not merely was it the physical suffering and sorrow that man could give Him, as they nailed Him to the tree, but the inevitable sense that God and He must part company. Hence as He looked at that cup, He said, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." He knew that if He did not drink that cup of judgment upon the cross, you and I would have to drink it in eternity. If He did not drink the cup in our room and stead, there was no deliverance, no salvation, no pardon, no cleansing, possible for you and me. As He looked at that cup He shrank from it in all the perfect holiness of His being, and deprecated it with

the utmost intensity. Then He took it, and drank it to the very dregs in the perfection of His love. Blessed Saviour! Well may each redeemed one cry, Hallelujah, I am saved; I am saved by His death. We are saved because He drank God's cup of wrath, to the very dregs, so that He, in tender love and divine righteousness, might put the cup of God's salvation into our hands, and press it to our lips. May we not joyfully say, "What hath God wrought?"

Nor is this all. He died to save us, He now lives to succour us. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. iv. 15). What is that? Just what we have been considering—the temptation in the wilderness. And now He is able to succour us. "For in that he himself suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. ii. 18). He is able to save, He is able to succour, and He is able to sympathise (Heb. iv. 15). Note well the passage—"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. vii. 25). What is the meaning thereof? That blessed, great high priest, now at God's right hand, understands perfectly all the pathway of the Christian here. He has gone through it Himself. He took up all our sorrows in His life that He might sympathise, and He took up all our sins in His death that He might save. Now on high He can succour and deliver His people absolutely. Hebrews iv. 15 alludes to the temptation in the wilderness, and Hebrews v. 7 gives us the agony in the garden, as He looked at the cup, shrank from it, and then drank it.

With Him, then, it was "prayers and supplications." Do you know what the apostle connects with prayer and supplication for us? "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by *prayer* and *supplication* WITH THANKSGIVING let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. iv. 6). Thank God. Christ's prayers and supplications were coupled with strong cryings and tears, ours are to be coupled with thanksgivings, for His death and resurrection have brought us into peace, liberty, and rest before God.

And now, let me again ask, who would not have this blessed One as Saviour, Lord, and Friend? Who would not seek to follow Him? He is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him, for He has overcome Satan and spoiled his goods. Fellow-Christian, you and I were once servants and slaves of the devil. But what has happened? The Lord has picked us up, saved us and cleansed us, filled our hearts with peace and joy, and given us the privilege of telling other people of Himself.

What a wonderful thing is the grace that picks up the vessels of Satan's power, delivers and cleanses them, and then deposits in them some spiritual gift by which others may be helped. Christ ascended on high that He might send down the Holy Ghost with the glorious news which, when believed, delivers sinners from Satan's power, and brings them from darkness to light. And there is the value of preaching. The preacher goes out and tells the simple tidings of the love of Jesus and the value of His blood. Any one that believes and decides for Him, God will give His Spirit to, and very likely make him the means of blessing to somebody else. That is the way the gospel spreads. First of all you receive the

gospel yourself, and then constrained by His love you go and tell others what Jesus has done for you. Like the man whose eyes Jesus opened, you can say, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John ix. 25). Who wrought this marvel? Jesus. My hearer, believe in Jesus, and then go home and tell your friends: "I have found the Lord. I am delivered. I am set free. His blood has washed all my sins away."

Now, the gospel is not only that Christ has overcome Satan morally when tempted in the wilderness, but that He has gone right down into death, and there destroyed his power. Further, He has risen triumphant, and the devil knows it well. As a consequence there is peace for you. You learn to know a risen, triumphant Christ at God's right hand. The Man who overcame Satan morally in the wilderness—while He was on His way back to God's right hand—has on the road carved the pathway for me to accompany Him, and has opened the doorway right up to God's presence through His death and resurrection. As He died He said, "It is finished." When He rose, He said, "Peace unto you." The Holy Ghost has now come down to tell us that the Victor is in the glory. And the man that believes in Him shares His victory, and enters into the spoils of His conquest.

If you have never before made up your mind for Christ, surely you will believe Him and confess Him to-night. Then you can joyfully go through this world and say: "Come, see a Man that has overcome Satan, borne all my sins, saved me for ever, and now fills my heart with peace and joy. His name is Jesus." If this be the case, God will make you the means of blessing to others. May He grant it for His name's sake.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LORD JESUS' FORTY DAYS.

RESURRECTION SCENES : MARY MAGDALENE AND HER MESSAGE.

(JOHN XX. 1-18 ; ACTS I. 1-3.)

THE "Forty Days" which we are now to consider are the last of the series presented in Scripture. They are full of the actings and words of a Man risen from the dead, who has accomplished redemption, and is about to pass into the glory of God, and I should like to say a little to-night, and for some nights to come, of the manifestations of the Lord to His disciples during the forty days He was on the earth after His resurrection.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was the precious and blessed evidence of the completeness of that atoning work which He had come to effect. He has passed into glory now, and that is where you and I know him, but His various and many appearings on earth were necessary, in the ways of God, to attest the fact of His resurrection, and by "many infallible proofs" it was wonderfully proven. The position which the Lord took up during those forty days, that of a Man who had died out of this scene, and yet who

was alive unto God here upon the earth, moving and speaking by the Holy Ghost, is the just expression of what Christianity is for you and me now. He was a Man alive from the dead upon the earth, and He spoke and acted in the Holy Ghost. And what is a Christian? A Christian is one who has died out of this scene, in the death of Christ, and yet now lives. As Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). But everything is by the Holy Ghost.

I quite admit that the day of the Holy Ghost did not come during those forty days when the Lord was here. He went on high, and after ten days had rolled by, the Spirit of God came down on the day of Pentecost. But what one sees here is this, a Man alive on the earth in the full power of the Holy Ghost. It is thus the Acts of the Apostles opens, when Luke says, "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen" (Acts i. 1, 2). Now Christianity takes pattern from Christ always, and I believe that here we have the pattern before us of what a Christian is. Christ was then a Man alive from the dead, walking in the power of the Holy Ghost, in relationship with God; and you and I, fellow-believer, are now privileged to enter into the same blessed and wonderful relationship, a divine position into which we are brought in virtue of our association with Christ.

One of the most blessed things about these "forty days" is this, that on the very day He rose from the dead, the Lord appears to one of His disciples,

and brings out this most precious truth in a way that is absolutely charming to the soul that gets hold of it. To Mary Magdalene He said, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God" (John xx. 17). This was the most wondrous message that ever came through mortal lips, and Mary uttered it that day. Never before could that have been said, but, redemption accomplished, the moment had arrived for bringing out the new and heavenly place into which those whom the Lord Jesus called His brethren, as associated with Himself, are introduced. They are to be now in relationship with God, known as the Father, in virtue of His death and resurrection.

In all these appearances of the Lord we get very blessed and precious truths presented to our souls. He loved to assure His own of His identity and His love, "To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts i. 3). The knowledge of the Father was to mark the sphere of which He Himself is the Centre and Head, and He was bringing His disciples, in these resurrection scenes, into fresh touch with Himself, and connecting their hearts with Himself. These scenes, therefore, I need not say, will have a very peculiar interest to every heart that loves Him.

I wonder how many times He was seen after He rose? When the apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians to prove His resurrection and meet their Sadducean folly, he only cites five instances, though of course there were a great many more. I judge that we have eleven occasions given to us in the Scriptures where the Lord was seen on earth in resurrection. I

will indicate them ; although to-night I shall only speak of the first.

He appeared first to Mary Magdalene (Mark xvi. 9); then to her Galilean friends (Matt. xxviii. 9); then to Peter (Luke xxiv. 34; 1 Cor. xv. 5); then to the two going to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 15); and last of all to a company in the upper room (John xx. 19). Thomas was not there then. That gives five on the day of His resurrection. The next Lord's Day He appeared again to the apostles when Thomas was with them (John xx. 26). Later on He appeared to seven of them, down in Galilee (John xxi. 1). That was the seventh time. I know it was the seventh, because Scripture says it was the third. That is a very curious thing, you say. Well, it must have been the seventh, because He was seen five times on the first day, then again the next Lord's Day, the sixth, and now this is the seventh. Then He appeared to the eleven disciples down in Galilee at the mountain side (Matt. xxviii. 16, 17). That is the eighth. Then we are told He was "seen of above five hundred brethren at once" (1 Cor. xv. 6). That was the ninth. Then He was seen of James (1 Cor. xv. 7). That is the tenth. "Then of all the apostles" (1 Cor. xv. 7). That was the time, I apprehend, when He led them out to Bethany, as recorded in Luke xxiv. 50. That is the eleventh. There was also a twelfth, for Paul says, "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (1 Cor. xv. 8), but this was in glory. That is to say, the close carries you to the spot where Christ now is. These gracious appearances of the Lord to His disciples on the earth, carry with them very sweet and touching lessons for us. May we profit by their consideration.

Now, let us turn for a little to the history of the one to whom He appeared first. In the last chapter of Mark we read another, and rather different account of Mary Magdalene, from that given by John. "Now, when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, *out of whom he had cast seven devils*. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not" (Mark xvi. 9-11). There you have very shortly told what were the facts with regard to Mary, and what was the effect of her testimony. She was not believed. Now there is something very solemn in that, if we bear in mind the message which the Lord gave her in John xx. Nothing could be more blessed than the message she carried. It is so solemn to feel it was not believed. And it is not believed to-day. There are very few believing souls to-day that have the faith of the message that Mary Magdalene carried at that time.

We may here inquire the reason why the Lord Jesus appeared to her first. I believe it was because of her devoted affection to Him, for nothing is more sweet to Christ than that. It may have been ignorant affection, but it was deep. She never forgot what and where she was when Jesus first met her. Her heart had been the abode of seven devils. Their expulsion became the opportunity for her to enshrine Jesus therein, and when He was crucified her love had lost its all. You know that her name has been connected with Magdalene Institutions, from the supposition that a profligate early life of sin had been connected with the "seven devils" which Jesus cast out. There is no hint whatever of this in the evangelists. I think

the whole thing is groundless and gratuitous assumption. There is nothing in Scripture stated of her beyond this fact, that she was possessed of seven devils. I know that she has been confounded with the woman in Luke vii., who is stated to have been a sinner, and who washed the Lord's feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. We are not told who she was. But evidently she was not the Mary who anointed His head, as recorded in Matthew xxvi., Mark xiv., and again in John xii. The house in which the woman wept over his feet, and anointed them too, in Luke vii., was that of Simon the Pharisee. Whereas we are told distinctly in John xii. that Mary of Bethany anointed the Lord in the house of Simon the leper.

Neither of these two women must be confounded with Mary Magdalene. Who, then, was Mary of Magdala? I conclude that she was a noble lady of means. In the eighth chapter of Luke you find what is very interesting regarding her. "And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God : and the twelve were with him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance" (vers. 1-3). Jesus had ministered to their spiritual wants, and they ministered to His bodily wants. They were, in plain language, devoted and attached to Him, and followed Him, as His blessed feet took Him into every hamlet telling out God's glad tidings. What, then, marked Mary Magdalene

was this, her deep-rooted and blessed attachment of heart to Christ. Cultivate this, beloved friends, for there is nothing can take its place. I believe the Lord cares more for that than anything else. You may tell me she was not intelligent. She was affectionate, which is far better. You may think that you are very intelligent. Possibly you are, but, after all, how little we all know. But I do not think that intelligence ranks very high with the Lord. It is not that I make light of it, but when there is affection there will be intelligence sooner or later, though the reverse is by no means assured. When we come to the twentieth chapter of John's Gospel, we shall find that the most intelligent person on earth was Mary of Magdala. And I do not think anybody would dare say she was not the most affectionate.

Why does the Lord Jesus single her out for His first appearing? It was her affection put her in the place where the Lord could reveal Himself to her, as He does. She had been fully possessed by satanic power, but Jesus had cast the seven devils out, and from that hour the sense of the glory of her Deliverer, and the recollection of what she owed to Him who had delivered her, bound that dear woman's heart to the Lord Jesus in a way that you and I might well emulate. God give us, every one, to have a little more of the love for Him personally, that marked this dear woman.

On the day of the passover Mary had seen her tenderly loved Deliverer ruthlessly slain. She had stood by His cross, along with her friends, "who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him" (Mark xv. 40, 41; John xix. 25). Together they heard His last words, and then, having

seen where He was laid (Mark xv. 47), they returned to Jerusalem and "prepared spices and ointment" (Luke xxiii. 55, 56), "that they might come and anoint him" (Mark xvi. 1). When the Sabbath was past, they went out, when it was yet dark, their only thought being that He was to be kept in death. Did Mary Magdalene go with the same thought? Most probably and therein lay her ignorance. Had she not, as well as others, heard that He was to rise again? I could scarcely say that. What she felt was this, that the world was, to her, completely empty. But indeed there was something emptier than the world. What was that? Her heart, without Christ. There was where the void was, and it completely isolated her. Consequently, although some of the Gospels would lead you to think she was in the company of other women, I have no doubt, from the twentieth of John, that her affection carried her out to the Lord's sepulchre alone, early in the morning.

"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre" (John xx. 1). From what is told us in Matthew xxviii. 1, it is quite possible that the others may have gone out with her, on what we call the Saturday evening, and carried with them the spices they had prepared to embalm Him. But before the daylight of the first day of the week came in this woman is there alone by herself. She does not care for company. And when she thus comes, she finds an empty tomb, and the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. Scripture says, "Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter." Love made her heels fleet that day. And to whom does she run? Simon Peter. Why? You know there is a saying that, "A fellow-feeling makes us

wondrous kind." She knew the void in her own heart, and she knew also what had taken place with regard to Peter, and it made her feel—There is one at least who will understand, if the rest do not. So she "cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved."

I have little doubt that was John. It is the way he speaks of himself all through his Gospel. And had the Lord a particular love for John? I do not doubt the ways of John pleased Him, but the point for you and me to learn is this, he speaks of himself not by his name, but as the one who knew that he was loved of the Lord. Can you tell me the disciple to-day whom Jesus loves? Ah, do not look round, please. I do not think you will see him if you look round. I tell you what it is, if you have not got the sense in your heart of being "the disciple whom Jesus loves," you have not touched the kernel of Christianity yet, and you are out in the cold, instead of being in all the warmth of the affection of the blessed Lord. What John knew was this, "I am loved of the Lord." You and I should go about with this thought exhilarating our souls, "I am loved by Jesus." I think every Christian should be able to take up that place in the history of his soul. Anyway John did.

Well, Mary runs and says, "They have taken away *the* Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him" (ver. 2). The effect is this: "Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre" (ver. 3). It is very striking the way the Spirit gives us all these details. "So they ran both together; and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre" (ver. 4). Now I think that, if I had been asked which of these

two was the most stalwart, I should have said Peter. I would have expected him to have been the fleeter of the two. Surely he would outrun John. No, he is outpaced this time. Do you know why? Peter carried with him an awful load that day. There is nothing that puts such a drag on the feet as a bad conscience. Peter was not happy, and if you are not happy, you are not going very fast, dear fellow-Christian. Are you rejoicing in the Lord's love? If not, you may depend upon it, your pace is not very rapid.

We are told that John outran Peter, "And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in" (ver. 5). You may say, Why did not John go in? He was a Jew, and he had doubtless a Jewish feeling, that, if he went in, he would defile himself. And so this spiritual man, John, for the moment stops. He had not yet learned that Christ having come, everything is taken out of type and shadow now. Old impressions fill his mind and hold him back. "Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre" (ver. 6). He goes in, heedless of any consequence. The remembrance of his ways and words in the high priest's palace, and his denial of his Lord, spurred him to enter. It led him to risk everything, and lose sight of everything. What availed his position as a Jew, if he had lost Christ, after having grieved Him, and wounded Him.

Impelled by the urgency of his own feelings, Peter enters the sepulchre, "And seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself" (ver. 7). There had been no tumult

there. All was calm and quiet. Like one who has passed the night in peaceful slumber, risen in the morning and laid aside the clothes, here the Lord lays aside the death-clothes. What is the lesson? He has done with death. He had set aside everything that relates to death, the fruit and wages of sin. The napkin folded and laid aside tells of the reign of death being over for ever. Resurrection glory is to replace death. These details have indeed a meaning for the heart. I see He has gone into death and annulled it. He is risen now. Resurrection power and resurrection joy are to flood the scene. Everything now is in resurrection for the Christian, for being *in* Christ he is on the other side of death. I do not say that Peter and John learnt this wondrous lesson then. Have you and I learnt it? Ah, brethren, it is easy speaking, but the question is, where are we in the history of our souls? Are our souls really linked with Christ where He now is? What they saw was the proof of His wondrous victory.

And now John goes in. "Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed" (ver. 8). Believed what? I do not think exactly that he believed in Christ's resurrection. He believed surely that the Lord was gone. The tale that Mary had brought of the Lord being gone he believed. "For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead" (ver. 9). Up to that moment the great and glorious truth that He must rise from the dead, which He had pressed on them again and again during His life-ministry, never seemed to have got into their souls. There is nothing we are slower to reach than resurrec-

tion ground. When He came down from the mount of transfiguration, He said to them, "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead" (Matt. xvii. 9). But spite of that, the great blessed truth, which is the backbone of the gospel, resurrection, they had not at that moment reached.

Hence, what we find is this, "Then the disciples went away again unto their own home" (ver. 10). And why to their own home? Because they had a home. They had spheres of interest, and to these spheres they go back. "But"—that is a wonderful little "but"—"But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping." Why did not she go home? I do not think I am wrong when I say she had not one. She may have had a house but not a home. Where Christ had been was really the home of her heart. That sepulchre had held Him whom she loved so deeply, and therefore a home she had not. The fact was this, her world was gone, everything was gone, because He was gone. And oh, what a blessing it would be for each of us, if Christ were all to our hearts. Take away Christ, and all was gone for Mary. Desolation and an empty heart were hers, but as for home she had none. The home of her heart was away. She had lost the One who ravished her heart, who had first delivered her from Satan's power, and then filled her with the knowledge of His own love and grace, and bound the affections of her heart round Himself, for after all, there is nothing like love, and love produces love. You cannot force it. It is reciprocal, and nothing will keep your mind so steady, and cause your heart to flow out with love to Him, as the enjoyment of His love to you.

And do you not think it was a joy to the heart of

Jesus as He saw from the distance that weeping woman? You may depend upon it, the Lord noticed her that day with the deepest interest. Do you think He notices us to-day? Does He see where our hearts are? Is He not interested as to where the affections of our souls are travelling? Surely, for He is unchanged—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He is the same to-day as He was that morning. There was a blessed sight for Him to behold that resurrection morn—one person in this world who could not do without Him. Yes, that is very blessed.

"And as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?" That is all the length, you notice, they can go. They see her sorrow. They notice her tears. And they are interested sufficiently to inquire why she weeps. She gives them the answer, "Because they have taken away *my* Lord, and I know not where they have laid him" (vers. 11 and 12). When she went to Peter and John, do you know what she said to them? "They have taken away *the* Lord," because He was also their Lord. But now when the angels ask why she weeps, what does she say? "They have taken away *my* Lord." How personal. How precious to the ear of Jesus to hear this—"My Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back" (ver. 13).

Suppose you and I saw two angels, what do you think we should do? Now, honestly own what you would do. Honestly, I think I should take a

downright good look at them. And I should probably think I was a very favoured person to see angels. I should not quite believe you, if you said you would not look at them. You do not know your own heart. Ah, but look at this woman. Angels had not the faintest attraction for Mary. She was not controlled by them, nor held by them. What does she do? She turns her back on them. Ah, beloved friends, what do we turn our backs on? I fear that something less interesting than an angel is sometimes apt to hold us. Is not that true? Look at Mary. "She turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus" (ver. 14). You may tell me she was blind. Well, sometimes love is blinded by its very tears. But anyway, though her love was blind, mark, friends, the love was there. She was evidently in deep distress since the object of her love was, as she thought dead, and now quite gone from her grasp. It was an agony of love.

And now we read, "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? *whom* seekest thou?" You remember He had said somewhat similar words to two men before. The one was Andrew, and I am sure the other was John the evangelist. He did not get this question in John xx., because he had a home and had departed to it. But he once heard this same voice saying, "*What* seek ye?" He and his companion replied then, "Master, where dwellest thou?" (John i. 38). That meant, Lord, let us know how to find your home. This day John missed that voice, but Mary heard it. Not "*What* seek ye?" but "*Whom* seekest thou?" is the Lord's touching query here to Mary. The point is, nothing can satisfy the renewed heart but the Person of Jesus, and the en-

joyment of the love of Jesus. The Lord knew that, and drew near to her, fully prepared to fill to the full the empty heart that deeply and truly loved Him. And I believe we may know the same. Nothing really fills the heart but the enjoyment of His own love.

We are reaching the climax of this deeply touching scene, as Jesus inquires : " Woman ! why weepest thou ? whom seekest thou ? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away " (ver. 15). Very striking is the way in which, in Scripture, you get the gardener brought in. In the opening book of Scripture—Genesis—you have the gardener. He was the first Adam. He was put in Eden to till that garden, but failed. It is a garden here again, and in this garden you have now a broken-hearted woman, who has lost her all, and that all, the Lord of Glory. She sees Him, but knows Him not. And now she says what to me is one of the most touching things that could possibly have fallen from her lips, and which must have affected the heart of the Lord very greatly. " Sir, if thou have borne *him* hence, tell me where thou hast laid *him*, and I will take *him* away " (ver. 15). She offers, in her deep affection, to do that which her womanly weakness would have made an impossibility, viz., take Him away. She does not name Him. She does not lisp the title of the Object she is looking for. Her world was " Him." So full was her heart of Him, that she thought everybody else must be thinking about Him too.

It has been often said, If I have a sick friend, and call to ask for him, I simply say, " How is he ? " They know who I mean, because everybody in that house

is thinking of the sick one. And so here. "Sir, if thou have borne *him* hence, tell me where thou hast laid *him*, and I will take *him* away." That is an absorbed heart. I have heard it said, she was culpably ignorant. Why do you not again and again tell me she was very affectionate? Are you as affectionate? I wish, indeed, that I were. Do you not think that reply of Mary's that resurrection morning was like a cup of cold water to the tender, but hitherto oft-times deeply wounded heart of Jesus? I trow it was so indeed.

The closing scenes of the Lord's earthly history are very beautiful from this point of view. Responsive affection is frequently seen to gladden His heart. In the early part of the Gospels He comes out like a magnet and attracts many sad and weary hearts to Himself. He satisfies and fills these hearts, and among them Mary Magdalene's. And now, when you come to the close of His career here, it is beautiful to notice how the Father works to draw out divine affections from these same hearts towards His blessed Son. Among others, God allows Mary to come and fill a cup, that which would give joy to His heart. Notice the action, just a week before, of Mary of Bethany. How she refreshed His heart as she broke her box of ointment over Him. And do you not think the testimony of the dying thief on the cross was like a cup of cold water to the blessed Lord? Again, Nicodemus coming out boldly and owning Him after He was dead was suited and right. And was it not timely and divinely perfect that there should be one to meet Him, that resurrection morning, whose attitude said, "You are everything to me, and I cannot do without You."

I do not know whether you or I ever spoke to Him in this way. And if Mary did not put this sentiment into words, I know what the Lord took out of her words. What but this?—"That heart finds everything in Me, and cannot do without Me." Do you think He talks that way about you and me? Ah, we may well ask ourselves. Do you think he would thus speak to us, "*Whom* seekest thou?" Suppose He got upon our track to-day and just asked us: "What are you seeking? Is it Myself? or is it something here?" What would our answer be? We are often so taken up with the things of this life, with what concerns our home and business. It was not so with her. Her Lord absorbed her heart and controlled her. What a joy to the heart of Jesus!

It is at this moment that the Lord reveals Himself to her by one word. She cannot do without Him, and she shall not for a single second more. "Mary" falls upon her ear. That is all. "Jesus saith unto her, Mary." He had said before, "And he calleth his own sheep *by name*, and leadeth them out; and when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for *they know his voice*" (John x. 3, 4). Do you and I understand what it is to be thus called of the Lord by name? And do we answer Him just as she did that day? Oh! what a revelation to her soul. "She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni: which is to say, Master" (ver. 16). Why does the Holy Ghost tell us she turned herself? We saw just now that when she saw angels she turned her back on them. Now she sees a man, and she turns her back on him. It was Christ she was looking for, but she had not at that moment found Him. But all is revealed to her in one word,

"Mary." She had heard that blessed voice before, in the day when He delivered her from the seven-fold power of the devil, and in a moment she turns herself. The truth is out. He is there. She has found the One whom her heart desired above all things.

I do not doubt, in the impulse of her affection, that Mary was just about to do what her Galilean friends did afterwards—touch the Lord. She is checked by the word, "Touch me not." And why may she not touch Him? He tells her, "For I am not yet ascended to my Father." She was going to take up relationship with Christ on the old ground. That would not do. She was henceforth to know Him in a new place altogether. Where do we know Him? At God's right hand. We know not Christ after the flesh, but as the risen, ascended, and glorified Man. "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (ver. 17). Mary here had the most wonderful message given her that ever was committed to human lips down here to carry to others.

You might ask, Why did the Lord refuse Mary's touch, and yet let the Galilean women touch Him? I will take that up and fully answer that question at another time, God willing, only saying now that an earthly people will yet know and have Christ in their midst as the living Messiah. But Mary prefigures the heavenly saints, and illustrates what is the truth for us. She was only to know Christ as we know Him, *i.e.*, as gone on high. I think when He said, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father," a thrill of disappointment would go through

her heart, which meant : "Am I to lose Thee again, Lord? I lost Thee, and my heart was broken, and now I have found Thee." His reply seems to say this : "No, Mary, you knew Me here, and you lost Me. Now I am going back to a spot where you can always find Me and never again lose Me."

There is immense importance in His words, "Go to my brethren." He could, on resurrection ground, now own all who believed in Himself as His brethren. His death had cleared away everything that lay between them and God, and He could now take up "His own" as being His brethren. He was here the true corn of wheat. He had said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 24). And here was the true unique Corn of Wheat alive from the dead, and He has His brethren in association with Himself. Hence He instructs Mary, "And say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

If you will read the Gospel of John carefully, you will find that up to chapter xii. the Lord almost invariably says, "my Father," though sometimes it is "the Father." From chapter xiii. and onwards He usually speaks of "the Father." That would raise the question, whose Father is He? If He be the Father, of whom is He the Father? In reality the day of the Holy Ghost is anticipated, as He speaks of God as being *the* Father. But now, redemption being accomplished, death annulled, and Jesus in resurrection, God is revealed and made known to us as *our* Father. He, as it were, says to Mary : "You thought you had lost Me. No, no, you have got Me, and you go and tell My brethren this. I had a place up there

that was always peculiar to Myself. I was the delight and the joy of My Father's heart, but I was alone. I have come down from that scene of life and joy, and gone into death for My own, and settled every question. I have cleared the whole scene, and now I am going back, but not alone. On the ground of the work I have accomplished, I am going to take My brethren with Me. I will now share all with them. Go tell My brethren that My Father is their Father, and My God their God." This was the glorious message Mary's love to Him had secured for her—a message unique in its nature and import.

Now, my friends, do you believe that message? Had Jesus not already said, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it"? (John xvii. 26). He had. The same resurrection music is found in one of the Psalms: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren" (Ps. xxii. 22). The sorrow of death over, Jesus hastens to declare the Father's name to His brethren. Note well that we have not touched Church ground here yet; but you have now the declaration of the Father, and that leads to it. And remember, beloved, that this is all individual. You will never know the joy of what it is to be an integral part of the assembly unless you get the sense, His Father is your Father, and His God your God. As a believer in Him, and having received the Holy Ghost, I am entitled to know that I am on the same identical ground before God as that risen, triumphant, blessed Man. In plain language, Christ's place is our place, and Christ's relationship our relationship.

God's object, in Christianity, is to bring us into complete association with Christ. Absolute identity with Christ, where He now is, as risen from the dead,

and glorified, is our portion through infinite grace. He was once absolutely identified with us where we were in death. Once He was the solitary Corn of Wheat, which, except it fall into the ground and die, abideth alone. But in order to bring forth much fruit, He has died, and now there is a wonderful crop. Around that risen Centre, see the untold numbers of the grains of wheat. They are His brethren. The feeblest, simplest believer in Jesus has now the same place before God as that glorified Man at God's right hand. For mark, we must have either Christ's place, or no place. This is just what we read elsewhere: "For both he that sanctifieth (Christ), and they who are sanctified (all who are Christ's), are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren; saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee" (Heb. ii. 11, 12).

Humanity is now glorified at God's right hand, and the place Christ has now taken there in resurrection, is the place He has secured for you and me. That place of holy joy and blessedness in the Father's love and presence He shares with all "His own."

Wondrous indeed was the favour conferred on Mary Magdalene to carry such news to the disciples. Love to the Lord Jesus personally secured her this immense boon, and we can well conceive the joy that filled her heart, when, in obedience to His behest, "Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her" (ver. 18).

To this simple affectionate woman is granted the immense favour of carrying this message to those who were the Lord's brethren, and eventually form

the nucleus of His Church. Why had she this honour? Because she was devoted to Him. Among all the appearances of the Lord in resurrection to those who loved Him, be sure of this, that Mary's was not the heart least devoted to the Lord. Further, among the thousands of Marys who will be found in glory, a peculiar place will this Mary have, as the one who gratified the heart of the Lord that resurrection morning as none other did, and then became His messenger of, without exception, the most wonderful communication that mortal lips could utter. What could be more wonderful than for a sinner, delivered from Satan's power, and redeemed by grace, to learn that she was absolutely identified with that blessed One, who came down alone, and then went back to heaven and took a company with Him, and be entrusted with the exposition of the scripture, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me" (Heb. ii. 13).

Well, so much for devotedness. And now why do not we more often carry sweet messages to comfort souls? I think it is that we are not devoted enough, we are not near enough the Lord to get from Him the word for souls round about us. May we all be more devoted, and may the Lord give us to know more and more what it is to be so near to Him, that we may be suited vessels whom He can use to carry sweet tidings of grace to others. You cannot tell me, after what we have been considering, that Mary of Magdala had no intelligence. Tell me any one more intelligent. John was not in it, and neither was Peter. The only one at the moment who was really intelligent was Mary, and her love undoubtedly led her up to the intelligence. God make you and me more like Mary of Magdala, for His name's sake.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LORD JESUS' FORTY DAYS.

RESURRECTION SCENES: MARY'S FRIENDS AND THEIR MESSAGE.

(MATTHEW xxvii. 57-66, xxviii. 1-20.)

I HAVE no doubt that the second company of individuals who saw the Lord in resurrection were the women who are named in this twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew. We saw last week that Mary is a type, if you will, of the heavenly saint. That is the saint who knows Christ where He now is. He had said to her, you remember, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father: and to my God, and your God." And she went and told the brethren the truth of the present moment, *i.e.*, that our position, our portion, and our relationship to God are identical with that which the blessed Lord now occupies. We are in union with Him and in association with Him where He now is, in the Father's presence, the Father's house on high. In fact it is heavenly ground. Whether we have touched it or enjoyed it, is another question altogether.

Now you would notice as I read the twenty-eighth

of Matthew just now, that when the Lord met this company of women, and said, "All hail," that "they came and held him by the feet and worshipped him" (ver. 9). Now, why should He say to one woman, "Touch me not," and permit another company to touch Him and hold Him by the feet, while they worship Him? Well, beloved friends, I think the reason is very simple. Mary was to introduce the heavenly side of the truth, and is herself a figure of the heavenly company, who by faith know the Lord where He now is in heaven. Such is the blessed privilege which belongs to you and me now, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. But the heavenly side of Christ's reign in the hearts of men is not everything. He is coming back again to head up all things by-and-by in heaven and on earth.

Our portion is heavenly, but there will yet be an earthly company and earthly blessing, for the Old Testament Scriptures speak largely of promises and blessings for earth and an earthly people. I grant you that everything is gone into ruin and failure on the earth for the time being, and Satan's power is only too manifest, but, thank God, the earth will yet own the sway and delight in the presence of Jesus; and there will be a redeemed and renewed Israel on earth, who will have Him in their midst as their King, and who will own Him and delight in Him, just as those women do here.

Old Testament Scripture is full of the fact that the glory of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea. But then His glory cannot fill the earth till He Himself takes possession of the earth, nor until He puts the earth right. These "times of the restitution of all things," as Peter calls them

(Acts iii. 21), will be connected with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ upon earth by-and-by. His feet will yet stand on the Mount of Olives (Zech. xiv. 4), and there will be an earthly people delighted to welcome Him.

Now I make these remarks just at the beginning, because they will help us to understand the way in which this truth comes out in the last chapter of Matthew's Gospel. What we have in the closing chapter of Matthew is exactly what I should expect. You know that Jesus had come as the King of the Jews, and Messiah; but He had been refused the throne; He had been ignominiously rejected. Nothing therefore could be more suitable or beautiful than to see the way Matthew's Gospel closes. It presents the King in the midst of a company upon earth who have Him and hold Him, who know Him, and worship Him. If we had only got the Gospel of Matthew, we should suppose the Lord to be upon earth just now, because there is no account of His ascension in Matthew.

It is beautiful to see the way in which Matthew's Gospel closes, with the blessed Lord having round Him upon earth those that delight in Him. The instruction that is connected with this fact is by no means unimportant. I daresay you know, that there are many who have thought the Gospel of Matthew incomplete, just because you have no account of the ascension of the Lord therein. One noted Anglican divine has gone so far as to say that he believed there would yet be found a manuscript of this Gospel containing an account of the Lord passing up to heaven. Now to have the ascension in Matthew's Gospel would be to spoil it entirely, and I trust I shall be

able to show to you the reason for that statement. Among my hearers I know that there are many young Christians, and if they get the outline of this Gospel, they will see why we have not the ascension here, and how this falls in with what has gone before.

Now just go back and see how we have the Lord Jesus presented in this Gospel. The four Gospels present the Lord Jesus in four different aspects. Matthew presents Him as the King of the Jews, the Messiah, but as the rejected King. Mark gives Him as the Servant. Luke delineates Him as the Son of man. John presents Him as the Son of God.

Matthew opens most beautifully with the genealogy of the King, because if it be a question of a throne and kingdom, the One who claims that throne and that kingdom must give the most incontestable evidence as to His right to it. Now that is just the way in which the Gospel opens. The genealogy of the Lord Jesus furnishes the most irrefragable proof of His claim to the throne of David.

Just turn back to the first chapter for a moment. "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham" (ver. 1). And then we read, "And Jesse begat David *the king*; and David *the king* begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias" (ver. 6). So you have there, in the middle of the genealogy, what I call the keynote of the Gospel struck. It is the genealogy of the King. I do not go into the detail of it, but there you have the Lord's title to the throne of David, proved in the most unmistakable way.

I must just point out in passing the wonderful way in which the grace of God comes out, dear friends, in this genealogy. There are here introduced the names of

four women, that any one but God would have kept out of the genealogy. Who, of set purpose, in preparing a genealogical tree to prove a title, would have brought in the story of Rahab the harlot, or Bath-sheba, or Ruth, or Tamar? Ah, none but God. You see God wrote this Book and not man. Man would have carefully excluded the names of Tamar, and Rahab, Bath-sheba, and Ruth. Not that Ruth's name was foul, yet she was a Moabitess, and as such forbidden to enter the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation for ever (Deut. xxiii. 3), but the other three had the foulest tarnish on their names that a woman could have. Man would have carefully omitted all reference to such palpable blots on his family scutcheon. Not so God. When He is about to narrate the genealogy of His Son, become a man to bless man, God brings them in. That is to say, in these four women you have the most beautiful illustration of how the grace of God can rise above the sin of man, and even permit that which is the outcome of man's weakness and sin to be the very occasion for the introduction into this scene of His own blessed Son, who was to be the Saviour of the world, as well as the King of the Jews.

Chapter ii. gives you the birth of the King, and the first question in the New Testament, as the Magi say, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" (ver. 2). Thereafter comes His flight into Egypt, that Scripture might be fulfilled (ver. 15), as regards that, and also His later dwelling in Nazareth (ver. 23).

Chapter iii. introduces John the Baptist, proclaiming the fact that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. In plain language he announces the advent of the King, and then he baptizes the One who is the King.

The King comes upon the scene, not in display, might, and glory, but lowly, and taking His place among the remnant of Israel, the godly.

Then chapter iv. gives you the story of the temptation in the wilderness. Looked at from the Lord's side it is the lovely display of His moral beauties as a dependent man, but, I think, viewed from another point, it is to bring to light the actual deposition of the usurper. It is Satan beaten. The true King morally defeats and overturns the one who, so to speak, filled the throne of the world. And that is Satan.

When you come to chapters v., vi., and vii., you find one continuous subject. All the instructions there found may not have been spoken by the blessed Lord at one moment, but they are taken up by the Spirit of God, put together consecutively, and you have before you there what is often called "the sermon on the mount." Those chapters give you in detail the laws of the kingdom, the principles that are to rule the kingdom which is to be introduced by the blessed One who comes as the King. Only notice, He never says He is the King. It is most beautiful to see that there is only one instance in the whole of the pathway of the Lord Jesus, in which He says He is the King (see Matt. xxv. 34, 40). When describing the future judgment which will mark His kingdom, He twice calls Himself the King. But He never claimed kingship. I fancy that had it been you or I we should have claimed our rights. That was not Christ's way. He could not take the kingdom in its then condition of sin and rebellion. He will get it by-and-by, according to God, and on the ground of redemption.

In chapters viii. and ix. you will find grouped together all the powers which mark the introduction

of the kingdom of Messiah, as foretold in Isaiah xxxv., which you should study. You have the miracles of the Lord condensed and brought together. There are twelve miracles in these two chapters, and they are brought together, I have no doubt, to form a dispensational picture, and show in the most incontestable way that He, who was the Messiah that should come, was here. And He was here doing that which Jehovah alone could do. That is the point of chapters viii. and ix.

Then, when you come to chapter x., you will find the Lord calls His twelve disciples, whom He names apostles, and bids them go out and preach the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is announced by His authority, and the apostles are sent out to preach it. Now you would have thought that, this being so, the King would have been accepted, and the kingdom would have been set up. But, alas! what you find is this, in chapter xi., John the Baptist doubts Him, and the Pharisees and everybody disbelieve Him. In plain language His testimony is not received. When you come to chapter xii. the spirit of opposition to Him is deeper, and though "the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David?" the religious leaders of the moment—the Pharisees—reply, "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils" (vers. 23, 24). His mighty power to heal and bless they ascribe to Satan, and not to the power of the Holy Ghost. In plain language they absolutely refuse Christ altogether, and as a consequence, in the close of chapter xii., He refuses to own the nation as God's people any more. The link is broken, and the Jews are cast off for the time being. Every thought of setting up the kingdom on earth

is abandoned, for if the King be rejected, how can the kingdom be established?

Coming to chapter xiii., you there get the similitudes of the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom is now in mystery, and you get the truth relating to the Church of God—the new work of Christ—unfolded. But, as far as the kingdom in manifestation on earth is concerned, it is abandoned. The next thing is this, the leaders of the nation begin to plot for Messiah's death. Judas becomes the tool in Satan's hands to deliver Him to His enemies, and the end is soon reached. They nail Him to the cross, and, above His head, the inscription, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (xxvii. 37). That was His crime nailed up over His head. As you know, when the Romans condemned a man to death, they always placed the crime for which he was to die over his head. Now what was His crime? That He was what He said He was. And what was He? He was Jesus of Nazareth, Jehovah the Saviour, and King of the Jews. Then the chief priests come and say to Pilate, "Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am the King of the Jews" (John xix. 21). "Pilate answered and said, What I have written I have written" (ver. 22). He had the sense that what he had written was true. Thus the King died, crucified by His own subjects, and the Scripture was fulfilled, "And after the three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and have nothing" (Dan. ix. 26). It is very interesting to see the way, particularly in Matthew, in which God records the facts concerning the death of the Lord Jesus, as also His burial, and His resurrection.

The careful reader of Scripture cannot but be struck

with the great number of times the expression "That the Scriptures might be fulfilled," occurs in Matthew's Gospel, far more frequently than in any of the other Gospels. Not infrequently you get, "As it is written," in each Gospel, but Matthew goes further, and twelve times says, "That the Scriptures might be fulfilled" (see i. 22, ii. 15, 17, 23, viii. 17, xii. 17, xiii. 35, xxi. 4, xxvi. 54, xxvii. 9, 35).

Now let us notice what occurred after the Lord was dead. "When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathæa, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: he went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed" (vers. 57-60). You must understand of course that a Jewish tomb was not like our graves, a hole dug in the earth. In this instance Scripture is careful to tell us it was hewn out in the rock, and it was a new tomb. And why a new tomb? Because Christ must ever have the first of everything. He will not take the second ride on an ass (Mark xi. 2), the second place in a tomb (Matt. xxvii. 60; John xix. 41), or the second place in your heart or mine.

The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah had predicted what you have here. Just go back and look at it. "He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death," or more truly, "And his grave was *appointed* with the wicked,

but he was with the rich in his death." What is the meaning of that? The Jews had designed undoubtedly to put the blessed holy body of the Son of God, along with both the bodies of the criminals, who died by His side, into the common pit. Satan's malice not only suggested that He should be betrayed by a familiar friend, but that after He was dead His body should be cast into the common pit. God's answer to this insult to His Son was already recorded. "His grave was appointed with the wicked, but he was *with the rich* in his death." This is beautiful, and the reason yet more so. "Because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth" (ver. 9). In that terrible hour when everything seemed over, and when His own had all lost hope, and Satan thought he had then everything in his hand, God remembered that "he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth," and the rich man of Arimathæa, Joseph, stepped in and secured His body.

What Jesus had been in all His pathway suited God absolutely, and here we see that the very care of God for His body in death was connected with the beauty of His life. Do not let us forget it. It was not loosely penned by the Spirit of God that, "with the rich man was his tomb, because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth" (ver. 9). I do not think that could be said of anybody else. Christ was absolutely transparent in everything, and therefore, the rich man turns up. That is to say, the death of Christ produced what His life had never produced. Joseph had previously been "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews"; but now you notice he comes boldly out, claims, gets, and then buries the body of Jesus in his own new tomb.

Now we read in another Gospel, "Wherein was never man yet laid" (John xix. 41). Why is God so careful to say that? The answer to that question is found in the Old Testament, and its perusal will help you to observe how carefully God guards everything connected with the person of His blessed Son. Go back to the Second Book of Kings, where we read: "And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men: and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet" (2 Kings xiii. 20, 21). I think it is easy to see now why it was said to be a new tomb "wherein was never man yet laid." If the Spirit of God had not been careful to record this, Satan and the Jews would soon have had the story in circulation that Jesus was risen from the dead, but that was nothing new. That was what happened in Old Testament times. He had been put into a tomb where the bones of some prophet lay, and consequently He had revived again. God foresaw that lie, and has taken great care to tell us it was a *new* tomb.

And there they laid Jesus, "And there was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre" (Matt. xxvii. 61). That took place on what we call the Friday afternoon. "Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be

made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead : so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch : go your way, make it *as sure as ye can* " (vers. 62-65). I have no doubt, from the way in which Pilate speaks, that he had a deep sense that the Lord would arise from the dead. Could any power keep that blessed One in the grave? Impossible. And I think Pilate knew it in the bottom of his heart. "So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch " (ver. 66). It is a most awful thing, when you come to think of it, that the religious world did its very best to keep Christ out of the scene. Fancy sealing in a dead Man, and then setting a lot of soldiers with drawn swords round Him. The fact is this, they issued the finest testimony possible that He had risen, when the time came (xxviii. 11). Satan always defeats himself.

Now we read, "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre " (chap. xxviii. 1). You must bear in mind that the Jewish day began at six o'clock in the evening, so the Sabbath had gone by, and the first day of the week begun when those women at eventide came out. Elsewhere we are told that they "rested on the Sabbath day according to the commandment " (Luke xxiii. 56). They obeyed the law. They had prepared spices, "that they might come and anoint him " on the Friday evening, and then rested on the Saturday. That was the Sabbath. The Lord's Day has nothing at all to do with the Sabbath. The Sabbath is the last day of the week. There is no such thing as

the Christian Sabbath, although men often so speak. There is the Lord's Day. The first of the week is the day that belongs to the Lord. And I claim a greater sanctity for the Lord's Day than the Jew does for the Sabbath. You and I give the Lord the first day of the week.

The point here is, that on the Sabbath Day they were obedient, and rested. Now apparently they go out in the twilight, free from legal restrictions, for really the first day of the week had begun. Out go these two in the gloaming to see the sepulchre. What took place then? We are not told. Did they spend the night there? I do not know, for we are not told. But what I want to show you is this, that you must not read into Matthew xxviii. 1, 2, what is not there, and come to the false conclusion that they were present when the Lord rose, and present when the angel rolled away the stone. That cannot be so ; because, if you will turn to Mark xvi., which gives us another account, you read this, "And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had brought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him" (ver. 1).

They evidently thought of Him only as dead. "And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun" (ver. 2). Here Mark gives us a little bit of light. They were there at the rising of the sun. They must then have been there twice. I do not doubt it. Whether they went back overnight is not the question. They came out at the rising of the sun, but then, ere they got there, and ere the sun was risen, the blessed Lord had risen. "And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of

the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away : for it was very great " (vers. 3, 4).

The same story is given to us by the evangelist Luke. " Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them " (Luke xxiv. 1). When they get there, an angel meets them, and having heard his communication, we are told they go back. I have little doubt that it was Mary's lingering behind her friends, which became the occasion for her to see the Lord as we considered last week. Evidently her female companions were going towards Jerusalem when the Lord met them, as recorded in Matthew xxviii. 9. I have said, and I think you will find it is correct, that verses 1 and 2 of that chapter are not immediately consecutive in point of time. There is an interval of some hours between them. Verse 1 stands by itself.

The women went out in the evening to see the sepulchre, and I conclude, and am pretty sure I am right from other scriptures, that they were not there, because they had gone back to the city before verse 2 was enacted. Read it : " And, behold, there had been a great earthquake ; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow " (vers. 2 and 3). Verses 2, 3, and 4 are brought in to show what had taken place. There was an earthquake when the Lord died, and there was an earthquake when He rose. Man, the creature, was insensible to the wonderful work of Calvary. The earth, created by the Son of God, shook to its very

centre when He, who had been its Creator, died, and thereafter was buried, completely ending the history and life-page of the first man. And then, when He arose, again to its very centre it was shaken. What had happened? The most wonderful thing that ever took place, because infinitely greater in its issue than creation, was the resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God.

But you may tell me that creation was a wonderful thing. I know it. Something far more wonderful was the death of Him who was the Creator, and all that was effected by that atoning death, when He bare sins, met all the claims of God, glorified God in death, and then passed into the tomb. On this resurrection morning He rises out of death, and leaves every trace of it behind for ever. Scripture says, "Christ was raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father" (Rom. vi. 4); and again, that He "was quickened by the Spirit" (1 Pet. iii. 18); and again it says He raised Himself, for it is written, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John ii. 19), for "I lay down my life that I might take it again" (John x. 17). But the point is this, He rose, and I have no manner of doubt that He rose before the stone was rolled away.

It was not rolled away to let the Lord Jesus out of the tomb, but to let you and me look in and see the wonderful proofs of that which had taken place. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the evidence that death was annulled, the power of Satan broken, God perfectly glorified about sin, and that sin for ever put away. He defeated Satan morally in the wilderness first, then came out and spoiled his palace, but now He goes right down into the very centre of his kingdom, meets him in the citadel of his strength—

death—and overcomes him absolutely. By death He destroys death, and him who had the power thereof (Heb. ii. 14). And then He rises from the dead, the mighty Victor, and hastens to bring others into all the blessed fruits of His glorious victory.

Now you will find how this works out in this chapter. As has been often said, there is no singing here. Why? The reason is very simple. Redemption was not for angels. It was for sinners like you and me. Ah, friends, we have good title to sing. And we have ground for singing too. And if we do not sing, I want to know why? I tell you what it is, whenever a saint is downright happy he always sings. "Is any merry? let him sing" (Jas. v. 13). Joy in the Holy Ghost is that which marks the soul now that has the sense of what it is to be quickened with Christ and associated with Him where He is now before God, alive from the dead.

And now the angel addresses the women, who again appear upon the scene, and says, "Fear not ye." The first words you get from the lips of the Lord in resurrection, that we are told of, were, "Woman, why weepest thou?" The first word He said to the company of His disciples was, "Peace unto you." But I think the first testimony of the angel here is very beautiful. "Fear not ye." Now what is the great thought in resurrection? The dispelling of everything that would bring in fear. Fear must go, for "fear hath torment" (1 John iv. 18). Have you any fear? You do not know Christ in resurrection. We find an angel saying, first to the women, "Fear not," but what does Jesus say to them when He meets them? "All hail." An angelic note sweetly falls upon their ears to begin with, but how

beautifully is it confirmed by the Lord Himself. Beloved friend, if you have learnt the value of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, you are brought into an atmosphere where fear does not exist. People think it is almost right to fear, and they are afraid of this, that, and the other ill. Ah, my friend, I wish you would listen to the opening testimony in resurrection—"Fear not."

We come now into an atmosphere where everything is redolent of Christ and His victory, hence the believer in Him is to have power and victory. On the cross He was the Victim. And what is He now? He is the Victor. Get these two things in your soul. When I see Him dying, He is the Victim. When I see Him risen, He is the Victor. All power is in His hand. What room is there for fear and doubt? "Perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John iv. 11). Oh, beloved friends, it is a wonderful reality this. It is like letting in light where darkness has reigned. If only believers got in their souls the sense of what it is to be in association with Christ in resurrection, their experience would be wonderful. He brings us into a new place and sphere altogether. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. v. 17). I do not say they touched it all that day. If you, fellow-believer, have not touched it, you have missed God's mind for you. Thank God, I can say I have touched enough to make my heart rejoice. Year in and year out, heaven is commenced already for the heart that is in the joy of resurrection, and in association with Christ.

And now notice what the angel says to these women, "For I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified"

(ver. 5). It is a fine thing for those who look on to say, "We know ye seek Jesus." What do you think the world says about you and me behind our backs? Do you seek Jesus? It is a fine thing that. What you want is Jesus. You are all right if you are seeking Jesus. The angel then adds, "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (ver. 6). I suppose the angel took them by the hand and led them to the door of the sepulchre. They are to face not death but an empty tomb, the witness of resurrection. How people shrink from this! I have seen saint after saint, who when death came in view, was quite upset. Why? Because they have not been in this chapter, and really heard the words, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." And what is to be seen? Death annulled. That is the point. A risen Christ is to fill the horizon of our souls with peace.

And now the angel says, "Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead." If you have this blessed knowledge yourself, go and tell somebody else. Tell it to others. Further, "And behold, he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you" (ver. 7). Why Galilee? Ah, He was "Jesus of Nazareth," that despised place down in Galilee. He was not to be seen in Jerusalem, the centre of the world's system religiously. He was absolutely outside all that. And so it is to-day. If you are going to have the joy of Christ, you will have to take an outside place. "Inside the veil" (Heb. x. 20) and "outside the camp" (Heb. xiii. 13) go together. They are like the two blades of a pair of scissors. They must be pinned together; one is no use without the other.

You cannot get on in Jerusalem, so to speak ; if you really want Christ, you will have to go where He is to be found. And where is that? In Galilee, then despised of Israel, and the symbol now of our outside place as followers of Christ.

Another evangelist tells us that the angel says, "Go your way, tell his disciples *and Peter* that he goeth before you into Galilee" (Mark xvi. 7). I think it very instructive to see that the very servant—John whose surname was Mark—who broke down in his own service, and for a while turned back from the Lord's work (see Acts xiii. 13), should be used of God to record the sentence, "Go, tell his disciples *and Peter*," a message of deep comfort to another servant who had also broken down. Unless we have ourselves been broken down, we are not really able to help those who are broken down. There is wonderful grace in the words, "Go, tell his disciples *and Peter*." His Lord had not forgotten him. He had not cast him off, and, blessed be His name, He does not drop us because we have been feeble and failing.

"And they departed from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word" (ver. 8). There is a wonderful mingling of feelings there, "Fear and great joy." There was fear on the one hand, and great joy on the other. "And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail." Here is the second interview. What is the meaning of "All hail"? I could not put it into words exactly ; but for these lovers of Christ, whose hearts had been broken with the thought they had lost their blessed Lord, all of a sudden to hear His gracious voice thus saluting them, was joy indeed. To them surely it was "Welcome." That is the idea. It said

in effect to them : Every difficulty is over : the darkness has gone by, all is bright and clear. " And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him " (ver. 9).

Why does He not bid them not touch Him ? Because He is here the risen King alive from the dead, standing on earth in the midst of an earthly people who love Him, and worship Him. It is a miniature picture of His coming earthly kingdom. And if it be no joy to your hearts, it is to mine, that the Lord Jesus will yet stand on earth, that His head shall be crowned, and that He will be surrounded by a people who will own Him, delight in Him, and worship Him. The Psalmist says, " Praise *waiteth* for thee, O God, in Zion " (Ps. lxxv. 1). That is true, because Zion's voice is silent now. But it is going to break forth in praise by-and-by.

In the meantime what has happened ? The Holy Ghost has come down, and while the Jew has been cast off, the Church is brought in, and she takes Israel's place, but a much better place than Israel ever had. And we worship Jesus now. The blessing of the Church is of a double character. Christ is the Object of the worship of our souls now, and we have also the privilege of testimony for Him, as we pass through this scene, while awaiting His coming again.

Having accepted their homage, the Lord said to those who held Him by the feet, " Be not afraid : go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me " (ver. 10). He confirms to them the word the angel had given to them before, that Galilee was to be the meeting place. This all beautifully falls in with the scope of the Gospel. It is an earthly company here who are to have the King in

their midst, and they go down and meet Him. To His own, so assembled, He says, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (ver. 18). Let us never forget that.

Well, beloved friends, their Jesus is the blessed One that you and I know through infinite grace, not upon earth now, for He has gone on high, is there crowned with glory and honour, and we delight in the thought of the place where the Lord is now. If Mary Magdalene gives you, in figure, the heavenly portion of the saints now, it is well to see that these Galilean women, the second to whom Jesus showed Himself, bring out the earthly side of His kingdom. The heavenly portion is the first, and then comes the earthly. The order is just what we have in the Old Testament. Isaac's seed was to be as the stars of heaven, and Jacob's as the sand of the sea. That is the heavenly and the earthly. And Christ is the centre of both. One loves to think that an earthly people will yet receive, believe, and love Him, and He will say, "All hail," in a day to come, to the repentant remnant of the nation that rejected Him when He came as Messiah the first time.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LORD JESUS' FORTY DAYS.

RESURRECTION SCENES: THE JOURNEY TO EMMAUS.

(LUKE xxiv. 13-35.)

WE have looked on two previous evenings, beloved friends, at the first two appearances to His own of the Lord in resurrection. He appeared to Mary Magdalene first, we are told, and then secondly to her Galilean friends. The scripture before us to-night gives us the three other manifestations of the Lord on the day on which He rose. I have no doubt that they teach a very special truth regarding resurrection, as presented by the evangelist Luke. If it has not already struck you, you may read this twenty-fourth of Luke with fresh interest, bearing in mind the fact that, if you had only got Luke's Gospel, you would think the Lord was only one day on earth after He was risen, for Luke's record commences and concludes with facts that would all appear to have transpired in the one day.

The day begins with the women seeing Him, continues with the two going to Emmaus, and having

His blessed company for at least, I should say, a couple of hours ; then comes out the truth that He has already been seen by Peter ; and lastly, He is found in the midst of His own, makes Himself known to them, eats in their presence, teaches them, gives them a commission, leads them out to Bethany, and then passes up to heaven. Had we only Matthew's Gospel, which does not give an account of His ascension, we should think the Lord was still on earth, and, if we had no other Gospel but Luke's, we should think His sojourn here was just one day. And, in a certain sense, it is exactly that. It is essentially the resurrection day, with all the blessing, liberty, joy, and apprehension of God's mind and love that characterise it. It is a great thing for a Christian to get the sense "I am living in the resurrection day."

There is a great deal of instruction connected with the appearing of the Lord to the disciples in the upper room, which I shall touch on another night, as recorded by the evangelist John. But there are beautiful points, which should be carefully noted in this interview which Luke alone presents. His Gospel especially depicts the Lord in what I may call the human side of His character. And we must not forget that He is still a real, living, tender-hearted Man, and as much so, the moment I am speaking to you, as He was in the days of His flesh down here. Many a saint has not so got hold of Him, and that accounts for their distress in sorrow, and their dejection and depression in difficulties as they go through this scene. They have not learned that the risen and glorified Jesus is the same Jesus that passed along through this scene full of grace and tender sympathy. The full exhibition of all that God is, in His nature

and being, was made known in Christ, but, apart from that, He was a real, true, tender-hearted, gracious, holy, yea, a perfect Man, with all the exquisite sensibilities that belong to man, either Godward or manward as the case may be. And if perfect in His life when, in the days of His flesh, He trod this sorrow-stricken scene, He is unchanged in resurrection, proof of which is before you in the lovely way in which Luke presents Him when, alive from the dead, He seeks out and cheers His own in their varied states, through the hours of what rolls before us as one day.

Now comes the question, Who saw the Lord on the third occasion this day? I could not dogmatise, because Scripture does not speak, but I infer that Peter was the one who saw the Lord after the women of Galilee. You may rightly ask me my reason for so thinking. Well, when the two who went to Emmaus come back to Jerusalem, and get into the upper room, they immediately hear: "The Lord is *risen indeed*, and hath appeared to Simon" (ver. 34). That was the greeting they got as they entered the door; and the interview evidently had taken place previously. I will tell you my reason for so thinking. If the Lord has His eye, in this meeting to-night, more upon one than another, it is upon the unhappy heart that has dishonoured Him, disgraced His name, distressed the brethren, played into the hands of the enemy, and more than that, wrought for its own misery, after the fashion Peter had wrought. I think if the Lord has His eye specially on anybody, it is upon the backslider? And was Peter a backslider? That is not the point. Are you a backslider? Ah, brethren, backsliding is an awful thing.

But what is so precious to note here is the deep in-

terest of Christ in desiring to recover and put right a heart that has in any measure got wrong. You may not have gone the length of oaths and curses, but, like Peter, my friend, if you knew Jesus better in days gone by than you do now, if His company, His love, were then more the paramount necessity of your life, than at the present moment, it is because the things of the world and the flesh have come in to hinder and spoil you. He knows very well that your heart is not happy, nor at rest ; and I tell you what He would like to do. He would like to recover and make you happier than ever. If He would not, I do not know Him. But that is the Christ I know.

I shall not touch on Peter's restoration to-night, because it will come in its own place more fitly when we look at his *public* restoration, which was on the seventh occasion the Lord was seen. What Luke here records is his *private* restoration to his Lord. But there was a *public* restoration also to be effected, and that we are permitted to see by the Sea of Galilee, as recorded in John xxi. I do not doubt that Peter got then and there the sense of absolute restoration in every sense of the word.

And now let us go back to the two going to Emmaus. I do not know a more blessed journey than the one with Jesus to Emmaus. I daresay some of you very intelligent people will tell me they were going quite the wrong way. Well, I will not deny it. But what charms my heart is this, that Christ is at their side to put them right. I am not so sure that they were very wrong, for I have little doubt they lived there. I have the deep conviction they were man and wife. You may say they had left Jerusalem, which should have been their centre. I know what you mean, but when Christ

filled their hearts to the full, the eight mile walk back seemed nothing to them. You will see presently they got to a point when they could tell Him that the day was too far spent for Him to go farther, but, when He filled their hearts to overflowing, it was not too late for them to go back the eight miles to tell others the sweet news they possessed. Like bees going home from a good day's gathering, they are found in the hive sharing with the others the wonderful spoil they have gathered.

And now see how it happened. The tidings of the Lord's resurrection had evidently blown abroad. Mary Magdalene had come in and told her tale. Her Galilean friends had also come and told the apostles. You may think it a strange thing that the testimony of these dear, devoted women was not believed. Make what you like of it, but it was so. In fact, the Spirit of God tells us that their testimony was regarded as "idle tales" (Luke xxiv. 11). The resurrection of Jesus, the victory of redeeming love, the testimony to all that was accomplished in His death, when it was first promulgated, was then, even by His own, regarded as an idle tale. Little wonder there is infidelity to day. Look at the semi-infidelity rampant among God's own people to-day as to the inspiration of the Scriptures, and "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12).

And now we read, "And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs" (ver. 13). That is about eight miles. "And they talked together of all these things which had happened" (ver. 14). Their hearts were deeply interested in Christ. God has been careful to tell us what they were speaking

about. They could think of nothing else, though I do not doubt they were bewildered by what had happened to the One they loved. "And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus *himself* drew near, and went with them" (ver. 15). Now I beg you to notice that little word "*himself*." I think the great point of Luke xxiv. is "*himself*." Presently you will find, "He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning *himself*" (ver. 27). A little later we find, "Jesus *himself* stood in the midst of them" (ver. 36). And then again, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I *myself*" (ver. 39). The great point is a risen Man, the same Jesus, but *risen*. That is the point undoubtedly of the evangelist in this chapter.

There are many Christians to-day who think of Jesus in His life and pathway, and yet in their hearts they are not at home with Him. Why? Because somehow to them the Jesus in resurrection is a different kind of Jesus, a little further off. Something has changed Him. I do not doubt that is why the Spirit of God says so strikingly in the Epistle of John: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John v. 20, 21). I do not think it is at all the question of earthly idols here. It is to keep yourself from any thought of God that does not find its perfect counterpart in Jesus. Because God is only known in Him. If I have a thought of God that is not expressed in Jesus, I have an idol before my mind, and not the true God. Therefore I believe

the Spirit of God lays great emphasis here upon this word "Jesus himself."

What was it drew the Lord to these wayfarers going to Emmaus? I do not doubt it was the perfect knowledge He had of what was going on in their hearts. Because, next to recovering a backslider, if He finds a saint in bewilderment, distress, or perplexity, how He loves to draw near and put that person right. Have you not known the Lord drawing near to you many a time, when you have been worried and perplexed, and you could not exactly unravel things? How He has by His Word, or some bit of ministry through one of His servants, come in and met you, and helped you. Just like the thirteenth chapter of John, where He takes a basin of water, and a towel, and washes His disciples' feet, so as to put them at perfect rest in His presence. Oh for an adequate sense of how He loves us. Have you any sense of His personal love for you? You say, "I know He loves the Church." You may know that and yet be miserable. But when you come to this, "He loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20), things become personal. You may depend upon it, that what the Lord delights in is the apprehension of His own personal affection, and also the responsive love that flows from our hearts to Himself. Do you know what He looks for? Two kinds of heart. A "boiling heart," and a "burning heart." He does not care for any other but these. In Psalm xlv. it speaks of a "boiling heart." Alas! oftentimes our hearts are not even on the simmer. When you put your finger into a pot that is just on the simmer, it is not hot enough to make you pull your finger out. But a boiling pot, ah! there is warmth there. What the Lord

looks for is a heart with warmth in it. In the Psalm alluded to I get the way the love comes out. Here, I get the way it is produced.

You say, "I wish my heart would burn." Just take a journey to Emmaus with Jesus, and I will guarantee your heart will burn by the time you get there. Now look again at these two travellers, as Jesus joins them. We read, "But their eyes were holden that they should not know him" (ver. 16). The eyes of a great many saints are "holden" to-day. I wonder whether you have ever noticed that their eyes were "holden" in verse 16, and their eyes were "opened" in verse 31. Now, dear friends, why was that? Lots of things are allowed to come in and hinder the soul. Well, you say, they were not intelligent. Ah, I tell you what will open the eyes—a burning heart. When your affection is right you will very soon see things. People sometimes say, "We do not see." The question is, Do you want to see? If you were to see such and such things, it is very likely they would cut you off from a good deal you are going on with now. I believe at the bottom we sometimes do not want to see the truth. Our hearts are very like Zipporah's. She said, "A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision" (Exod. iv. 26). She did not like death any more than you or I like it. But she knew very well if she was to keep her husband, her lad had to be circumcised. She had to accept death. It is a great thing to have the "burning" heart and the "open" eye. The Lord give both to us.

"And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" (ver. 17). Suppose the Lord crossed our path to-day and said, "What are you

talking about?" do you truly think He would find us talking about Him, His interests, and His things? It is very good for us if it be so. But if not, we shall have just to own how true was the word of the Lord, "My people have forgotten me days without number" (Jer. ii. 32). Blessed be His name, He has never forgotten us.

And now we read, "And one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem?" Now you might have thought it strange because I said just now this couple were man and wife. I have pretty good reason for thinking so. Here we get the name of the man—Cleopas. If you turn to the nineteenth chapter of John, you there apparently get his wife spoken about. "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene" (ver. 25). Then you might say to me, That would not be conclusive. No, but their invitation to the Lord, "Abide with us" (ver. 29), would show that they lived together, that is pretty certain. And there is yet another reason I can advance. Do you know why the Spirit of God in the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, when citing the testimonies to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, selects only five out of the eleven appearances? Turn to it and just see what I mean.

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this

present, but some are fallen asleep. After that he was seen of James: then of all the apostles" (1 Cor. xv. 3-7). These are only five out of the eleven times He was seen. Mary Magdalene is omitted, and her Galilean friends; the two going to Emmaus, the appearing of the Lord in the upper room on the first day, the appearing likewise at the Sea of Galilee when the seven saw Him, and the appearing down in Galilee, recorded in Matthew xxviii., are all left out. In every one of these six instances, unbelief of the testimony to Christ's resurrection was displayed, and in most of them you will find women were present. For some reason or other God has been pleased to omit every instance in which women were present.

On the first day of the week, in the upper room, I conclude that women were present, when Thomas was not (Luke xxiv. 33; John xx. 19). We are not told that any were present the next week when He was seen "of the twelve." It was manifestly not an apostolic company only that we find in Luke xxiv., because to begin with, Thomas was not there, and there were present a great many others beside the apostles. How do you know that? Read verse 33. There evidently was a large company. The disciples generally were gathered together, and that depicts the truth of the assembly, and the Lord was in their midst. However, I do not want to trace out that side of the truth to-night.

I have therefore, from the foregoing considerations, the deepest conviction that one of these two going to Emmaus was a woman. And it is beautiful to see that they were both of one heart. They communed and reasoned together as they went, and Jesus was the burden of their talk. If you are married, I hope you

do the same. It is just what ought to be, and it is very blessed to see that when God gives you a record of this beautiful resurrection scene, He shows you a man and wife with one heart and one soul, walking to their house, and speaking together of His Son, and soon they have the blessed Lord going together with them. That was a happy house that night, and unhappy is the house that is not of that sort.

Well, Cleopas answers the Stranger's query by—"Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" (ver. 18). Very simple and very touching is that answer given to the total Stranger that addressed them. You might say, "Why did they not know Him?" Turn to Mark xvi. for a moment, and I think you will get the reason. "After that he appeared *in another form* unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: *neither believed they them*" (Mark xvi. 12, 13). Their testimony was not believed, just as, apparently, the disciples had not accepted the testimony of the "certain women of our company," who earlier in the day "astonished" them by saying "he was alive" (vers. 22, 23).

That was the reason, possibly, why their eye was holden. The Lord sometimes puts Himself in our company that we may learn just where we are in the history of our souls. He likes us to be real and genuine. We may be hypocrites before each other—that is, one may appear to be what he is not. Verily that is our danger. But He always likes to see the truth. He looks for the truth, and I do not think when He finds the truth, as He did find it in them,

that the Lord was in any sense angry with them, though He may rebuke them for their unbelief. But for the Lord to find you and me true and real, on the way, is a great thing. I think He values and estimates it. And what does He find here? What I have no doubt was very attractive to His heart, a sorrowful and unintelligent couple, but a couple deeply interested in Him and His things. This led to His inquiry—"What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days. And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" (vers. 17-19).

Do you think there was no joy to His heart to hear this couple speak out what they felt with regard to Him? He loves to hear us talk about Him. Do you not know what it says in the Old Testament? "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name" (Mal. iii. 16). Here were two weary pilgrims on earth, and He hearkens to them. Listen to them, as they talk to Him in the most beautiful way, and describe what their feelings were in regard to Himself, though they knew Him not at the moment. He was a very interested listener, as they continue, "And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified

him" (ver. 20). That is what Israel had done. And now they tell the disappointment of their own hearts—"But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." They thought of the King: they thought of the glory and the establishment of the kingdom; and I do not doubt they were disappointed and dejected. Have you never been dejected? What a wonderful thing if the Lord draws near to you and brings Himself in as the spring of peace, joy, and gladness to your oppressed heart—the blessed heavenly answer to the many things here which have disappointed or dejected you. Their hopes connected with Him had all been dashed to the ground by His death, and apparently all was gone, though they admit their astonishment at what they had heard, but, evidently, had not believed.

"And beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive" (vers. 21-23). They tell the story very simply. Then they add, "And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said; but him they saw not" (ver. 24). There is a volume in those four words, "Him they saw not." Do you know why they did not see Him? They did not expect to. Did you see the Lord last Lord's Day morning in the meeting for the breaking of bread? "Oh, it was rather a dull meeting." Was Christ dull? "Oh, well you know things were not at all bright." Ah, you did not see Him? Shall I tell you why? You did not expect to. You went to meet somebody

else, or expecting to hear the voice of some one else. It was not Christ alone that drew you.

Many a time I have seen saints gathered upon right ground, and yet it could be said of them, "Him they saw not." Why? Because it was not Himself alone they went to see, and He let them have the fruit of their unbelief. Do you know the secret of happy, hearty, worshipful meetings? It is when every saint has come just to see Him, to meet Him, and to worship Him. "Him they saw not," is a serious allegation. Whenever you come away from a meeting gathered to His name and you have not seen Him, you may depend upon it the fault was not His, and it would be a great mistake to put the fault upon your brethren. You may depend upon it there was something wrong with yourself. Something needing judging had been allowed.

This statement on their part now leads the Lord to say that which we all should ponder and take to heart. "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (ver. 25). How true of us. How foolish are we oftentimes, and how slow of heart to believe the word. And then He says, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (ver. 26). Let us put ourselves back into their position that day, and think what a Jew looked for. The coming of the Messiah in power, the setting up of the kingdom, and the introduction of the glory, were the things which, according to Scripture, a godly Jew looked for. How deep then their disappointment, and the Lord understood it. And although He might chide them for unbelief, see how sweetly He passes on to say, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his

glory?" The sufferings and the glory go together. When you read the Old Testament you see that is the way in which it is put. It is the suffering first and then the glory. When I come to the New Testament, what I find is this, Paul has the deep sense of what it is to know Christ in glory, and hence he is prepared for the suffering. What made him here such a man as he was, willing to suffer anything for Christ, was the knowledge of Christ in glory.

"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (ver. 27). I think the Lord will forgive me, if you do not, for saying, how I should have liked to have been there that day. Would not you, brethren? Would not you have liked to have made the fourth that day, and hear Him open up "in all the scriptures the things concerning himself"? Why, sometimes your heart has fairly boiled, and the tears have run down your cheeks with joy as you have heard some bit of ministry of Christ from the lips of a poor servant of His. But think what it must have been to have heard Him going through the Scriptures from Moses on, and from type, shadow, figure, offering and sacrifice, picking out that which told of Himself, and so expounding it that their hearts began to burn. No wonder, the fact was this, they had never met such a Stranger, they had never had such ministry, and never had such company before.

And this lovely exposition went on during an eight mile journey. We can well understand what it produced. It wrought the most exquisite expression of true fellowship. The effect of that ministry was this, their hearts were knit to the Stranger, although they had no notion who He was. He was able to speak so

beautifully about the One who was dearest to their hearts that they craved for more of this ministry and fellowship. I do not know any scene in Scripture that expresses more sweetly the effect of real ministry of Christ. That always knits the heart to Christ, and to the one who so ministers. They did not know who it was who was so precious unfolding Christ to them. He immensely gladdened their hearts as He spoke of Him who was the burden and testimony of all Scripture. It made Christ increasingly precious to their souls; and ministry that does not do that is worthless, whether it be from my lips or anybody else's. If it does not minister Christ, and make Him more precious to the soul, it is valueless. Thus it is that true fellowship is produced.

This chapter presents a lovely picture of the way in which the Lord, in resurrection, opens up the Scriptures to His own people. Presently you will find He opens their eyes (ver. 31), and then He opens their understandings (ver. 45). It is a wonderful chapter of divine openings this twenty-fourth of Luke, beginning with an open grave and closing with an opened heaven. Continuing its instruction, we read, "And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further" (ver. 28). How beautiful is that touch. Christ never forces His company on us. He did not force it that day, and He does not do it this day. I can tell you exactly how much of Christ you will get. As much as you really want. "He made as though he would have gone further." And now I get the right state. "But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us" (ver. 29). The courtesy that ever marked Him, and was one of the perfections of His pathway

as a Man, is seen here. What right had He to enter that house? He had a right, but He did not assert it. The question was this, did they want Him?

He will never compel me to have His company. I do not deny what I may call the compulsion of grace upon the sinner, but, where a saint is concerned, He does not so act. Do you and I covet His company? "He made as though he would have gone further." I think I see them. Do they say, "Here is our house, will you come in?" Oh no, it was not that kind of thing. He says, "I am going on." "But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." They had to ask Him perhaps more than once. There is such a thing as the love of Christ constraining us. But here it was the love of saints constraining Him. It is reciprocal constraint.

Look at the sequel—"And he went in to tarry with them" (ver. 29). Ah! how glad their hearts were. They had His company who had made their hearts burn with ministry, the like of which they had never heard before. "And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them" (ver. 30). Here of course He takes His true place. He must be the master of the house. He is not the guest now. All is His. And sitting at the table, what does He do? "He took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to them." At once there is a recognition of Himself, and of His authority. "And their eyes were opened, and they knew him." And you may ask me, Is this the Lord's Supper? It is not exactly the Lord's Supper, and yet it is exactly that which should take place at the Lord's Supper. He gives thanks, breaks

the bread, and gives it to them. There is the ministry of Himself to the heart, and the eye is opened to discover His presence and His beauty.

I do not know what you have learned in your spiritual history; but I freely confess that I have never learned in the solitude of my closet, when all alone, in a Bible reading, or at a lecture on Scripture, I have never learnt God, or learnt the truth there as I have learnt in the assembly, and in the breaking of bread, where it has been the Lord Himself who has been the minister of His own table. It is a wonderful thing to be under the direct ministry of Christ, with man shut entirely outside. The effect is immediate: "And their eyes were opened, and *they knew him.*" If you want the truth you will get it. If you really want to have what suits Him, and to follow Him, He will give you your desire. So it was here.

The recognition of the Lord being complete, we read: "And he vanished out of their sight. And they said to one another, Did not our heart *burn within us*, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (ver. 32). It is a wonderful thing to get the Scriptures divinely opened up, for that kind of ministry of Christ always causes the heart to burn. If the Spirit of God comes and ministers Christ in His love, grace, beauty, and glory to your soul, you may depend on it, your heart will respond. And if it does not respond, you may well question if you are a child of God at all. It is easy enough to profess Christ. It is easy to say, "I am a Christian." But if my heart does not thrill when Christ is ministered, I may well question if I am a child of God at all. Do you say—You will put many of our hearts

shaking. Well, if they shake first and burn after, it will be all right. And if they never burn, there is something wrong somewhere. You get alone with the Lord, and if your heart does not burn while He talks with you, you may depend upon it, there is something radically wrong. The Lord give us a little more of the burning heart. It is a heart that turns first to Him in real affection, and then has something for others. This is the characteristic too of a boiling heart.

Do you often speak to others of Jesus? No. You have not a boiling heart then, I fear. A boiling pot is apt to boil over. We always know a boiling pot, and if there be one thing more than another that I love to meet in this world, it is a boiling saint. Some Christians whom you meet are rather like big blocks of ice. They chill one. God keep you and me from being that kind of saint. Give me a saint that will melt me, touch my conscience, furnish my understanding, and reach my heart. That is what I find on the resurrection day. Christ's company produced it then, and now does just the same. Look at the effect on those two disciples. Had it been most of us, we should very likely have said, "We have had a very nice profitable evening, and now we will just sit quietly still and enjoy what we have heard." Not so with them. They had just gone into their house, and what do we next read? "And they rose up early next morning and returned to Jerusalem." That might have sufficed us, but not this pair. "And they rose up *the same hour* and returned to Jerusalem." A little while before it was too late for their unknown Instructor to go farther, now it was not too late, nor were they too tired, to trudge back that eight long miles and spread the joy-

ful news regarding Jesus and the resurrection. The wondrous discovery they have made they must needs share with others. This is real Christianity. Carry to and share with others all that God has given your own soul to know and enjoy.

Would to God, dear fellow-believers, that you and I were more like this couple. Do brother Cleopas and his wife live in your district?

This devoted and rejoicing pair, in the shades of night, returned to Jerusalem, "and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon" (vers. 33, 34). They go in order to tell their news, and as they get in at the door they get their own faith most beautifully confirmed, as some one immediately exclaims, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." God always confirms the soul that receives and answers to the truth.

"And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread" (ver. 35). Do you break bread often? "Once or twice in a year." What a poor half-starved sheep you must be. Many a Christian says, "I like better to hear the preaching." I have no doubt they do. But hearing a servant speak must never supersede the breaking of bread. You will get more for your soul in one divinely-ordained breaking of bread than in fifty sermons. In the Lord's Supper you get the personal touch of the Lord Himself. You get the knowledge of His love and the sense of His grace, as nowhere else. I am persuaded the Spirit has a great meaning in recording "how he was known of them in breaking of bread."

What follows is deeply interesting. The Lord

Himself at that moment entered the company, saying, "Peace unto you." Then followed the attestations in relation to His veritable Manhood, and the truth of His resurrection, as He makes them touch Him, and then eats before them. Of this scene I will speak a little more, please God, another night.

May the fruit of our coming together to-night be to know the Lord better, and have His love more fully enjoyed by our souls. If there has been a bit of distance from Christ allowed, may we get deeply in our souls the sense, that to be where He is, is everything. It makes all the difference in the world what ministry you sit under. I sometimes ask people, "Who is your minister?" Is it that risen One in glory? Is it really the ministry of the Holy Ghost? To myself and to my fellow-servants I like to say, If our ministry does not shake people off ourselves, and attach them to Christ, it is not proper ministry. Right ministry is that which makes Christ precious, and helps the soul to get nearer to Christ. Thus you see He gets His right place in the affections of His loved ones. May you get your eyes opened and your understanding too, and you will find this to be a grand day in which you live—the resurrection day. Luke xxiv. is full of Christ, and the hearts of the disciples then were absorbed with Christ. He was everything to them, and the end of all is reached—they worshipped Him and were full of joy (vers. 51, 52).

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LORD JESUS' FORTY DAYS.

RESURRECTION SCENES: THE APPEARING IN THE UPPER ROOM.

(JOHN XX. 19-25.)

OF all the appearances of the Lord to His disciples in resurrection, there is none that eclipses the one that I read of to-night, in general interest, and likewise in the far-reaching character of the truth that is unfolded on that occasion. What a wonderful thing for the First-born from among the dead to appear in the midst of a company whom He owns as His "brethren." Next to His birth, and His death and resurrection, I think I might say it was the most wonderful scene that ever happened on earth. Think of it for a moment. The First-born from among the dead, the First-born of many brethren, is seen in the midst of His brethren; but on no account would I call Him our Elder Brother. No! My soul shrinks from that expression; because, although, in His infinite grace, He calls us His brethren, it ill becomes us to call Him Brother. He is our Lord; I think the lesson of the next Lord's Day may teach us that, when Thomas says to Him, "My Lord, and my God" (ver. 28).

Now I do not doubt that it was Mary Magdalene's testimony, as has often been said, gathered the disciples together. They did not believe her, to begin with ; but through the day evidently credence sprung up that Jesus was risen. In the evening, therefore, when it was dark, and I suppose nobody could see them, they came together. They learnt on that resurrection day that Christianity, if they then understood at all what it was, was a thing altogether apart from the world. That is a great lesson to start with. And with doors shut "for fear of the Jews" and to shut out the world, we find them together. The Holy Ghost lets us know that what really filled their hearts was fear, but, thank God, it was not very long before the fear of man was cast out by the peace of God. When Jesus came in, it made all the difference. And it is true to this hour, when He comes in everything is altered.

Now the way that John presents the truth here, I need scarcely say, is most beautifully in keeping with the character of his Gospel. Luke records things that occurred this wonderful evening that John does not allude to. I do not want you to miss the meaning of each record. That is easily done by taking the statement God has been pleased to give us, by each evangelist, out of its place. Each is perfect in its place. In these addresses, however, I am not unfolding to you the particular character of each Gospel, but just seeking that we may see the whole situation from all its sides, as God has presented it.

God's object in recording these scenes is to give us a deeper knowledge of the Christ whom you and I know. I do not say you all know Him. There are many believers to-day who do not seem to know Him. They would not deny His existence, His love or grace ;

but still I meet many a saint who is not at home with Christ. Their walk, ways, conversation, and whole manner of life show that they are at home in a different scene altogether. I believe the great point of these manifestations in resurrection is to impress upon our souls the blessed truth that an unchanged Christ is before our hearts. If you have travelled with Him through the Gospels, you will have learned much of His character. I will ask you, Have you done it? I do not ask you, Have you read your Bible, but, Have you travelled with Christ through the Gospels? Do you read them so as to put yourself in His company? You will never know Him otherwise; because the Spirit of God is not going to make revelations of Christ to you and me if we are lazy in perusing the record He has already given us of Him. I do not believe it for one single moment.

There is one thing God cannot do for us. God will not read the Bible for you, young brother. And God will not read your Bible for you, young sister. *You* will have to read it, and *I* shall have to read it, if we are going to learn Christ. Ah, you say to me, but Christ is now in a new place. I know. Christ is glorified. He is a Man in glory. As Man there in righteousness, He now shares with us all the blessedness of that place, and the Holy Ghost has come to dwell in us and carry our hearts to Him where He now is. But I believe the more I learn what Christ was as He passed through this scene the more the Spirit of God will give my heart to know Him where He now is. All that God has given us in these precious Gospels, as well as the Acts and the Epistles, is to make our hearts acquainted with Himself. If I want to know you, I must live with you. And if you want

to know me you will have to live with me. And it is exactly the same with the Lord. We have to keep His company.

Let us now see what took place this first evening. There are three evangelists who record this appearing of the Lord. In the last chapter of Mark's Gospel you have it simply referred to. There is no detail, and it is only Mark that tells us they had gathered together for an evening meal. "Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen" (ver. 14). Mark tells that the Lord rebuked them because of unbelief. That is to say, what was natural to the heart had come out, and the Lord rebuked it. The great lesson is this, the Lord Jesus does not like unbelief. He likes faith. That is what I get out of Mark's pen as regards this appearance.

There is a great deal more of the human side of things with Luke than with John. That is perfectly in keeping with his Gospel. You have the divine Person of the Son in John's Gospel, and truth connected therewith. In Luke we read that when the two returned from Emmaus and entered the upper room, they "found the eleven gathered together, and *them that were with them*" (ver. 33). That is an important verse, because immense ecclesiastical fabrics have been built in Christendom, with an utterly rotten foundation, viz., that this company was only apostolic.

The eleven were there most certainly; but the added word in Luke's Gospel, "and them that were with them," shows that it was the general company of the disciples. I am inclined to think it was a large

company, though perhaps not more than "one hundred and twenty," which is the number the Spirit of God tells us were gathered together for prayer in the first chapter of Acts. It was not, however, only an apostolic company, and that is a point of prime importance to bear in mind. That company had been gathered together from many parts, the disciples having heard, from Mary, the message sent to His brethren that morning by the risen Lord. Into their midst come the two from Emmaus with their news, and they are met by the testimony, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon" (ver. 34). It was manifest that Simon had seen Him, and had let the brethren know. But resurrection is a strange thing to the human mind; it is so out of the ordinary. Christ risen from the dead was a totally new thought to the disciples. To them Jesus was about to appear, in the same body in which He laid down His life, but now in a new condition altogether.

And now we read, "And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, *Peace* be unto you" (Luke xxiv. 36). That undoubtedly is the same apparition recorded in John xx. 19. He comes into their midst, and the first word is, "Peace unto you." Ah, brethren, what a blessed thing it is to have the sense in our souls that there is a new era inaugurated, an era of peace. The first note struck among the company that belongs to the risen Christ is, "Peace unto you."

I daresay you have been struck with the way peace is spoken of in the New Testament. If not, notice the testimony with regard to the Lord before He was born? Just go back to the first of Luke for a moment. Zacharias, filled with the Holy Ghost, says,

the effect of the visit of the dayspring from on high would be "to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into *the way of peace*" (ver. 79). That is the great thought before the mind of the Spirit of God through the mouth of Zacharias. Light and peace were coming in Christ. When He was born, as recorded in Luke's second chapter, you get, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and *on earth peace*, good will toward men" (vers. 13, 14). What was specially connected with Christ was peace.

Then you know He was rejected, but, if you turn to the nineteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel, you will see how the subject comes out again. When the Lord was on His way up to Jerusalem, yea, to death, we read, "And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: *peace in heaven*, and glory in the highest" (vers. 37, 38). In the second chapter it was "Peace *on earth*." But that day has not come. The Lord has been rejected, and now the Spirit of God leads our souls to the spot where He is. "Peace *in heaven*." And that is the truth for to-day.

What is the next thing? The death of Christ laid the righteous basis of eternal peace. That wonderful work of redemption having been accomplished by the blessed Lord, we read of His "having *made peace* through the blood of his cross" (Col. i. 20). Let me here ask you, Have you peace? My dear friend, you

are not *in* the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God is not *in* you, if that is not the case. Why? Because we read, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and *peace*, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17). What marks the kingdom of God? The blessed rule of grace, love, and goodness. "It is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." And if you have not peace, you are not in it. "Am I not then a Christian?" you ask. That is not for me to decide; I am only telling you where you are not. If you have not peace you are not in the atmosphere of resurrection. You have not touched what Christ came to effect and to proclaim.

He rises from the dead, and the very first word He says to the company is, "Peace unto you." It is a reign of peace, for He is the Prince of Peace, hence we read, "He came and *preached peace* to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh" (Eph. ii. 17). Again, Peter speaks of "*preaching peace* by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all)" (Acts x. 36). In Christ's death, burial, and resurrection I see that sin is put away, the power of the enemy broken, the history of the first man ended, and death left behind, completely annulled. As connected with Him risen we enter a new scene. It is the atmosphere of the Father's House. It is the holy sphere where the Son dwells. He says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (John xiv. 27). What had filled His heart all through the pathway here? Peace. What is the first thing He says after He is risen from the dead? "Peace unto you." How do you get it? "Being justified by faith, *we have peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1). Christ is it. On the cross He made it.

Risen, He proclaims it. In faith you receive it, and in the power of the Holy Ghost you enjoy it.

Not having yet received the Holy Ghost, the disciples at the outset did not enjoy peace that day, for we read, "But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit" (Luke xxiv. 37). There are many believers, alas, to-day terrified and affrighted. Why so? They have not got Christ simply before them. "And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" (ver. 28). The grace of the Lord here is excellent. Are you troubled in your mind? Listen to what He says. Have you any ground for it? Have you any occasion for it? "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" Ah, brethren, this is Christ's way with the troubled. We see others troubled, and perhaps say, "Poor souls," but leave them still in their misery, making no great effort to help them. In all this we are not much like Christ. No, He ever stoops to put a troubled person at peace.

Do you think the Lord wants a person with a troubled mind in His presence? Never. And if you get thoroughly into His presence, you will neither have troubles, nor will "thoughts arise in your heart." Ah, my dear brother and sister, there is the secret of all our troubles. Instead of being simple, childlike, and resting in the calm of His presence and the perfect exhibition of His love, what a tempest do "thoughts" often produce. But when you are in trouble, and have these thoughts, how Jesus loves to draw near and say, "Peace unto you." He brings in, I repeat, a reign of peace.

Now carefully notice what He said to His disciples. "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself."

He invites them to be assured it is really Himself. Whenever you know His voice, and are sure that it is the Lord Himself that is dealing with you, depend upon it, your soul will get sweet peace too. "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (ver. 39), is then His command. Not a word about His blood. Oh, no. That precious blood, that life-blood of His had been given in atonement. As we read, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. xvii. 11). Yes, His precious life's blood has flowed forth in death, the blood that cleanseth from all sin. That blood has glorified God. Well may the Spirit of God call it "the *precious* blood of Christ" (1 Pet. i. 19), for, indeed, it is blood whose far-reaching value has no limit. For the believer it quenches the flames of the lake of fire and opens the doors of heaven. That blood brings us nigh to God. We cannot over-estimate the blood. Do not let us forget the untold value of the blood of Christ in this day, for the tendency all round about us is to make light of that blood. God forbid that you or I should fall into so grave an error, so deep a sin!

It was when the Lord Jesus was dead upon the cross that His precious blood flowed forth. It was the expression of sullen hate that led the Roman soldier to pierce His side; but the point of his spear brought out the precious blood of the blessed Son of God, which was the expression of His deep and wondrous love to us. That blood "speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb. xii. 24), and it made peace. "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see

me have," expresses the risen condition of the Lord. His blood He has given for us. The reason that His Church can, by the Holy Ghost, be united to Him in glory is, that He has given His life's blood for it, He has purchased and redeemed it, and everything is based upon His blood. Testimony to the blood runs, like a scarlet line, right through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. It begins with "the coats of skin" (Gen. iii. 2) and closes with "the blood of the Lamb." There will be a renewed company in the millennial day who will fill the earth with praise, for they "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 14), just as we can now sing, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. i. 5).

The call of the Lord on His disciples to handle Him was to convince them of the identity of His Person, that it was indeed just Himself, risen, and again in their midst. "And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet" (ver. 40). This is very touching. Here were the marks of the nails. Here in His side was the testimony of death. "And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?" (ver. 42). The object before His mind was plain. Wonder and joy were mingled in their minds, and I can understand the mixed state of their hearts. They were thrilled with joy, while hampered with unbelief and wonder. His words, "Have ye here any meat?" made the reality of His presence absolute to them. "And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them" (vers.

41, 42). All was now clear. Every mist of doubt rolled away as they saw Him eat.

It is very touching to notice the way God puts things in His Word. When the Lord was going to give them the most conclusive testimony as to the reality of His Person, He eats the broiled fish and honeycomb, which they had provided for themselves, to assure them it is really Himself. When you come to John xxi., again there was broiled fish, but it was provided by Him to assure them that He cared for them. How rich and deep is the grace that ever provides that which will confirm our faith, and feed and sustain our souls.

Now why have we these details so specifically related to us? What does all this mean? It is the irrefragable proof that the Jesus of the Gospels and the risen Jesus is the same. And though eighteen hundred years have rolled by, He is the same in His tender love, sympathy, and grace as He was that day. Oh, to know Him better. You will find Christians to-day with a good deal of doubt, and with many "thoughts" in their hearts. I do not think, beloved friends, that such Christians are marked by great joy. Do you find them with an inward spring of joy always bubbling up? I cannot say that I do. Christ is not well known, because His company is not cultivated. The joy of His presence not being coveted, the sense of His boundless love is not known.

Now, my dear friends, I need not say these things ought not so to be. May God give you and me, therefore, to live more in the sunshine of His presence. We should seek to be like the little girl that got the prize for her rose-tree. She lived in an alley—poor little cripple—but strange to say she got the prize.

Somebody was very much surprised, and came to see how it was. "Oh," said she, "I will tell you how it is. My room has three windows. I always put the rose-tree at that window in the morning which first gets the sun, and when the sun comes round, I put it in this window, and when it goes round to that window, I put it there. I always keep my rose-tree in the sun." Sensible child! My friend, you get into the sun of Jesus' presence and stay there. Keep in the sunshine of His love and grace, yes, keep yourself *always* in the sun. My young fellow-Christian, do not you be thinking of fruit, or leaves, or anything else. You think of Christ, all will come right then.

Let us turn now to John xx. again, and see what came out there. I do not doubt that God gives us there a picture of the Assembly on earth. We reach heaven in spirit, but as a matter of fact we are still on earth; God gives us there in a most beautiful way that which presents to us the Assembly as under the eye of God. It was the testimony of the truth that gathered them together. The Lord had said to Mary, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." She carried the message, and its effect was that they were gathered together. We read, "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you" (ver. 19). The disciples were gathered together, and observe, none but the disciples. There was not a Judas there, and Thomas also was not there. I think he missed the finest meeting of all by being absent. Do you know what kept Thomas

away? I do not, but very little trifles often keep you and me from gathering together before the Lord. A very paltry thing will keep us away from a meeting. And that is often the time when the Spirit of God gives the most blessed view of Christ to the gathered ones. Thomas missed a grand opportunity. It is a lesson to you and me never to miss an opportunity of gathering with the saints of God if we have the opportunity.

The central truth of this first gathering is the glorious fact of their having Jesus in their midst. And that is just the Assembly. Perhaps some of you have not thought much about this. Where are you going next Lord's Day? I am going to hear so-and-so preach. Do you think that is what we have here? It bears no resemblance whatever to it. What I find here is this, a little company of those who were the Lord's gathered together, and the Lord Himself in their midst. Then He makes Himself known in a wonderful way. First of all He brings in peace, and then fills their hearts with joy. "And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord" (ver. 20). There we get the secret of joy. There are four great things in John xix. and xx. The death of Christ, which is the basis of all blessing; then His resurrection, which is the proof of His victory over the enemy; then the Lord in the midst of His own people, saying, "Peace unto you;" and then the next thing is joy. On His side were death and resurrection: on our side are peace and joy.

All this is hinted at in John xiv.-xvi. In chap. xiv. 27 He gives them peace. In chap. xv. 11 He gives them joy. In chap. xvi. He says, "A little while, and

ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father" (ver. 16). Their joy no man was to take from them (xvi. 22), and their peace was to be as abiding as Himself, for He says, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace" (xvi. 33).

And now we further read, "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (xx. 21). God expects us to be a peaceful company. If we go out in this world, we should have our "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph. vi. 15). And does not God also expect us to be joyful? Assuredly, "Rejoice in the Lord alway" (Phil. iv. 4), is the Spirit's command, "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. viii. 10). Show me a joyful Christian, and I will show you a vigorous, healthy one. But supposing I find a Christian that is an everlasting complainer, that person is not happy, and has not his feet shod with peace. Where, on the other hand, a saint is going on in the gladness of the Lord's love, there is a powerful testimony. There is nothing like abiding joy flowing from the knowledge of Christ, to affect those round about you.

And now observe the character of the commission the Lord gives His own. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (ver. 21). Where had He come from? The Father's house—the very atmosphere of peace and joy. Ere He died He had said to His Father in His wonderful prayer: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John xvii. 16-18).

How did the Father send Him into the world? To be the expression of all the love, grace, tender goodness, and holiness too, of which the Father Himself was the spring. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you," are wonderful words indeed, and it is an immense thing for each believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to bear them in mind. Remember He spoke them not to an apostolic company, but to all His own. You say, "I am going to heaven." It is quite true. Did you ever get the truth in your soul that you have come from it? This truth comes out in Acts x. There Peter saw a great sheet coming down from heaven, and it went up again to heaven. What Peter saw inside that sheet was very wonderful.

In that sheet were "all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air" (Acts x. 17). That is just a figure of what you and I have been. But, touched by God, and born of God, we have come from heaven, even as through infinite grace we are going there. I do not doubt it is all a question of association with Christ; Christ is there, and we are quickened with Christ, and then, by the Holy Ghost, united to Him. Nevertheless it is a wonderful thing for the Christian to discover, "as is the heavenly [Christ], such are they also that are heavenly [Christ's]. And as we have borne the image of the earthy [Adam], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly [Christ]" (1 Cor. xv. 48, 49). Hear it again. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Now do not you tell me that this is an apostolic charge. That is an easy way to avoid privilege as well as responsibility, and get away from the truth. Let us rather seek to get into the joy of our Lord's words. We come from heaven, and we

are going to heaven. The Christian is a heavenly being. You most probably have heard the following story regarding the late Mr J. N. Darby. A worldly Christian once said to him, "What is the harm of hunting?" "Let me ask you a question before I answer yours," said this venerable servant of God. "What would you think if you saw an angel on horseback in a hunting field?" "Oh, that would never do, an angel is a heavenly being," was the immediate reply. "Exactly so," said J. N. D., "that is what I am, and what every Christian is. He belongs to heaven."

This is a most important principle. It is not the question, Is this wrong, or is that wrong, but this—Is that the kind of thing that suits a heavenly person? On the other hand, it is not that you have to go round trumpeting that you are heavenly. Those who do so usually illustrate the proverb, "The legs of the lame are not equal" (Prov. xxvi. 7). The person that is in the enjoyment of what is heavenly, always has the deepest sense in his soul of how little he practically expresses this truth. The nearer we are to the Lord, the less we are in our own eyes. But the further away from the Lord we are, the bigger we become in our own eyes. Let us not forget this, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

"And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (ver. 22). Now what have you here? Of course it was not yet the day of Pentecost, so it could not be the Holy Ghost as a divine Person come to dwell in them. What was it then? Christ the risen Man was here taking His place as the second Man, the head of

a new race. He was from heaven, and here He is the last Adam. God made the first man, Adam, "of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. ii. 7). That was for the earthly pathway here. Here is the last Adam, the second Man, alive from the dead. He had already told Mary to say to His brethren, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John xx. 17), *i.e.*, He was going to share His place with them. And now, what does He do? He carries into effect what He had promised them in chapter xiv.: "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (vers. 19, 20). He breathes His own triumphant risen life into them. It is the life of the risen Man, imparted, and to be enjoyed by the Holy Ghost. As the second Man, the last Adam, He imparts His own life.

He is the First-born among many brethren, and they are one with Himself in His new place. It is all effected by the Holy Ghost. Here we get His breathing on them, and then the absolute gift of the Holy Ghost in Acts ii. "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. ii. 11). But it is Christ Himself here associating His brethren with Himself, and communicating to them His own life and place before God as the risen Man. Hence we can understand the words "when Christ, who is *our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. iii. 4).

If you will now turn to Romans viii. for a moment,

you will find that chapter gives us a great deal of instruction about the Spirit of God, which I would like to indicate to you. I have no doubt the truth that is taught by the Lord's breathing on them and saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," is that which is unfolded in the first eleven verses of Romans viii. It is the Spirit as life. It is not yet the Spirit as power. This chapter gives you the two sides of the truth, with regard to the Spirit of God, the Spirit as life, and as power. It is the Spirit as life, nature, and moral power, in Christ, up to the eleventh verse, and then onward you have the Holy Ghost as a divine Person dwelling in the Christian, as power for the enjoyment of the new relationship with God, known as Father, and for all the pathway of holy life here below.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is *life* and *peace*" (Rom. viii. 1-6). Mark these last words. It is not the peace of the fifth chapter; that is, that sins are all forgiven and blotted out. But it is this, in the Holy Ghost we have *life* and *peace*. That which

is true of us in Christ *objectively* is made true in you and me *subjectively*. He said when here, "I am the truth" (John xiv. 6). Why does it say elsewhere, "The Spirit is truth"? (John v. 6). Everything that belongs to me as a believer is true *of* me in Christ. That is the objective side of the subject. But the Spirit dwelling in the Christian makes it true *in* him experimentally, and Christ is really formed in him, and comes out of him in practical ways. Christ is my life, my peace, my joy, my redemption, my sanctification, yea, everything. Further, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus is our God and Father too, consequently, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). There the Holy Ghost is seen as a divine Person dwelling in the believer.

But here the Lord breathes on them, for they are to have life in the Spirit. In the second of Acts the Holy Ghost comes down and dwells in them, and makes everything good in them. Fifty days had to elapse before these disciples knew that wondrous blessing. I do not know that fifty minutes must necessarily elapse in your case and mine, after really believing in Jesus, before we receive the Holy Ghost. This is clearly seen in the case of Cornelius (see Acts x.). The Spirit of God gives us to know what it is to be forgiven, and to know that Christ is our life; and that He comes and dwells in the one who believes. The Spirit is life in you, and the Spirit is power likewise.

We now come to a passage that has in my judgment been sadly misunderstood. On it Rome and some of her daughters have built monstrous claims as

to forgiveness of sins for eternity being in the hands of the Church so called—really the clergy. On the other hand Protestants have shrunk from its plain and simple teaching, and utterly neglected its use. The Lord said on this occasion to His gathered people, “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained” (ver. 23). Now, that carries you of course a little further than the twentieth of John as to actuality. I do not doubt this instruction is both individual and collective. He so to speak says, “I will leave you in this scene to act administratively for Me.” This, first of all, is connected with the testimony as to the forgiveness of sins which was to be preached in His name. I believe that not only those who heard the Lord speak were responsible, but that individually, you and I are equally responsible to carry to men the sweet knowledge of the forgiveness of sins. It is not a question of our remitting them for eternity. God alone can do that. It is this, we are in the scene where Christ is not, and knowing what He has accomplished, the evangelist is to go out, and every Christian should be such in heart, and proclaim the good tidings of forgiveness to men. Notice that this testimony is not put in the hand of preachers only. It was not a question of preachers that night. It was the Lord saying to the whole company, “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them.” When you know forgiveness yourself, you can speak of it as well as any other.

But there is more than that in, “And whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” The Church—the Assembly as such—has the administration of this. Carefully notice that which happened in Acts ii.

Upon the one hundred and twenty disciples gathered together, the Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost: Peter preached the same day, and said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (ver. 38). What happened? Why, three thousand people received the word, were baptized, and then came to the hundred and twenty, and practically said, "We would like to take our place with you," and they manifestly remitted their sins, *i.e.*, took them upon the ground that they were forgiven of God, and gave them the right hand of fellowship. In the fourth chapter we find there were five thousand. Here was a small company upon earth—the Church of God—born of the Spirit, washed in the blood of the Son of God, indwelt by the Spirit of God, and so baptized into one body. They knew forgiveness and enjoyed peace, and when three thousand came and said, "We would be with you," they received them in the name of the Lord, they were brought in, and thus the Church of God was added to daily (Acts ii. 47). Of the newly forgiven disciples we read that "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts ii. 42). They walked in unity, joy, and gladness, which describes to us what was fellowship in that day.

It appears to me that the instructions of the Lord here might be administered to an individual, through an individual, or collectively by the Assembly, who on the one hand could say, "Come in," or on the other say, "No, we will not let you in." Illustrations of this are found plentifully in the Acts of the Apostles. When you come to chapter viii., Philip

doubtless thought he had got a great convert in Simon the sorcerer, and would have brought him in ; but when Peter and John came down, they read his true state, as having neither part nor lot in the matter, and kept him out of the Assembly. The name of the Lord Jesus is the title for the simplest and lowliest that believes in His name, and seeks to walk worthy of it, to enter the Assembly, gathered to His name, and that name is the warrant for keeping outside its precincts every one that is not really walking in godliness.

What we have had passing before us manifestly describes what was a wonderful moment for the disciples. It was a great thing when they could go home and say, "We have seen the Lord." It is equally so for us. If we have seen the Lord, and got our hearts attached to Him, we shall be well fitted to pass through the scene for Him. And mark, it is that which lies open to every one of us. It is not a question of preaching. It is this, you have come from heaven, for, as a child of God, you belong to heaven, and you are commissioned by your Lord in this scene to be here for Him, and to carry to others the sweet news of His love and grace. My brethren, may the good Lord help us to spread them as we pass through this scene. If you and I fail to walk with our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, you may depend upon it, we shall lose blessing for our own souls, and be of little use to others. The Lord teach us, and lead our hearts more to Himself.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LORD JESUS' FORTY DAYS.

RESURRECTION SCENES: THE APPEARINGS TO THOMAS AND THE SEVEN.

(JOHN XX. 24-31, XXI. 1-25.)

THAT which we have read to-night gives the account of the sixth and seventh appearances of the Lord to His disciples in resurrection, although you may have noticed, that with regard to the latter, it says in chapter xxi., "This is now the *third* time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead" (ver. 14). That clearly is the third time as recorded by John, for we have seen that He made Himself known on the day of resurrection to five different persons or companies.

The way in which John presents the Lord in resurrection is exceedingly interesting; and I have no doubt that in the three appearances which John alone records, the Spirit of God purposely brings before us three immense circles of truth. We saw last week, when speaking on this chapter, the Lord in the midst of His disciples. You have that which is a figure

of the Assembly now, the present place of privilege which Christ gives us here upon earth. It is very striking to notice, that, while John gives you so much of what you might call heavenly truth and heavenly relationship, his great point is that it is to be now known on earth. Many a saint thinks he will get wonderful blessing by-and-by. But John's great point is this, it is all to be known and enjoyed now while on earth. It is the revelation of what God is as already made known while in this scene. That is, you have the unfolding of what God is, and the sense of being in the favour of God while here.

Paul's ministry is quite different. He presents us before God, as in Christ, where Christ now is. John brings God down here. Paul takes man up there. Both are true, and both are necessary. Therefore, I repeat, that what we have in the first scene is what we as Christians should know and enjoy now. If we really are in the mind of God we shall know what it is to be gathered together as His children, enjoying His favour, led by His Spirit, and with the Lord Himself in the midst.

Thomas was not present on the occasion we have already considered, when Jesus came first into the midst of His disciples. He missed a great deal, it seems to me, by not being there. To miss a meeting may be a small thing in our minds, but Thomas missed a great deal that night. God often gives us great instruction in the history of a man, and that of Thomas is no exception. Did you ever trace out Thomas's history? It strikes me as being downward in tone. The first time he is mentioned we only get the fact that he was called by the Lord to be an apostle (Matt. x. 3). John mentions him four times.

First where we read, "Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus (he was a twin), unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John xi. 16). He was a *devoted* man there. Only a zealous man, whose heart is devoted, would say, "Let us go with the Lord though it cost us our lives."

Now come to chapter xiv. "Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" (ver. 5). He is *ignorant* Thomas there. He might have known. Had he had his ears wide open to all that he did hear, he would not have been so ignorant. Well now, what is he here in this twentieth chapter? I do not know the reason why he was not at the first meeting; but God takes good care to tell us that he was *absent* Thomas on that occasion, and as a consequence, incredulous, *unbelieving* Thomas. I do not doubt that God has brought great good out of his unbelief to many souls, still, the picture is not what I call pretty. Unbelief never pays. When the disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord," he replied, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (xx. 25). I do not doubt that he is a figure of the Jews, who will not believe till they see the Lord by-and-by. When you come to the next chapter, he is among the seven, who go a-fishing when they certainly had no business to, and got nothing for their pains (xxi. 2). I trust I shall not be giving him a hard name when I call him *disobedient* Thomas. Here is a man who begins devoted and ends disobedient, and, in between, is ignorant and unbelieving. That man had toned down. He is mentioned once more, however (Acts

i. 13, 14), and then is seen to be at a ten-day prayer meeting, the very best place in the world to get right, if we have toned down. Ah, my friends, it is very easy to tone down if we are not watchful. "Watch and pray" are words we all need to remember.

Let us now seek to learn the lesson of the Lord's sixth appearing. "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you" (ver. 26). First of all notice how the Lord puts His impress upon the first day of the week. There has been a little difficulty in the mind of some as to the particular place which the Lord's Day has in Scripture. I do not think that any person who reads Scripture carefully can fail to discover the place God gives it. It was on the first day of the week that Mary of Bethany anointed the Lord (John xii. 3). The Lord appeared to His gathered disciples on two occasions, and each time it was on the first day of the week (John xx. 19-26). It was on the first day of the week that the Holy Ghost descended at Pentecost, and formed the Church (Lev. xxiii. 17; Acts ii. 1-4). It was on the first day of the week "the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts xx. 7). Again we read in Revelation that John says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" (chap. i. 10), and this term—the Lord's Day—the Spirit of God fastens on the first day of the week.

I need scarcely remind you that many speak of the Lord's Day as the Sabbath. That is not the language of Scripture. We ought to be intelligent and scriptural in our use of words. When Scripture speaks of the

Sabbath it refers to the last day of the week. The Jew gave the Lord the seventh, the last day. The Christian gives the first day of the week to the Lord. And I should certainly claim for the Lord's Day a higher sanctity than the Jew does for the Sabbath. There ought to be a dedication of that day to the Lord, and the Lord's interests only. Such, alas! is not always the case with the Lord's people now. Nor is the reason of this far to seek. If the saints habitually breathe a worldly atmosphere, it is not at all difficult for them to assimilate what is all round about, but I do not think it is to our credit or profit, beloved brethren. I say that little cautionary word in passing, because if the thin end of a wedge get into a log of wood, it may soon be riven asunder, and if our thought of the Lord's Day is borrowed from the world, certain loss ensues. It is the day we ought to devote to His interests in every possible way.

This was the day the Lord selected to meet His own, and we should thank God for such a privilege being accorded to us. It does not follow, of course, that the breaking of bread must precede everything else on that day, as some suppose. Clearly the breaking of bread was in the evening, in the Assembly at Ephesus (Acts xx. 7). Whatever service to the Lord may have preceded that we are not told, but I do not surmise that the servants and saints of the Lord sat at home in idleness the previous part of the day. Not a bit of it. With us the gathering to break bread might be mid-day or early, but the point is this, the day is devoted to the Lord, and deeply thankful we ought to be to God for preserving to us, in the land in which we live, the Lord's Day in any measure of its scriptural character.

Let us now consider the interesting occasion when, for the second time, as He joins His own, the Lord says, "Peace be unto you." Mark what was to characterise the Assembly. It was peace. Again it is a meeting of the Assembly, and Thomas is with them. Again the first word is "Peace." He calls them into the blessed atmosphere of His own presence, and what does He breathe? Peace—that atmosphere of calm where God is known and enjoyed.

The Lord then addresses Thomas and says: "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God" (vers. 27, 28). He is bowed in worship. He really becomes a worshipper at this moment. He had said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (ver. 25). This leads the Lord to add now, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (ver. 29). These blessed ones I understand to mean the individuals who compose the Church of God at the present moment, while the Lord is absent.

Thomas is here the figure of the Jews who will not believe in the Lord until they see Him. Scripture manifestly states in many places that by-and-by He will be seen. For example, "They shall look on him whom they pierced" (Zech. xii. 10; John xix. 37). Again, "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory" (Matt. xxiv. 30). Again, "Behold, he cometh with

clouds ; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him " (Rev. i. 7). We are among the blessed company who have received the testimony of God to Jesus, though we have not seen Him. But the Jew will not believe in Him until He come out by-and-by in manifest glory, and then Israel as a whole, wrought in by God undoubtedly, will bow down to Him. They will believe in Him, delight in Him, and confess Him as Thomas does here, " My Lord and my God." Then will be fulfilled the scripture, " And so all Israel shall be saved : as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob " (Rom. xi. 26). Thomas, in this scene, is a figure unfolding to us the fact that those who have refused to believe, yea more, have rejected the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, will by-and-by be brought into His presence, and then they will own Him both Lord and God.

In connection with this second appearing recorded by John there is a little word added which is very interesting. " And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through his name " (vers. 30 and 31). The person who now believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, has life through His name. The Spirit does not say here that you *know* you have life—that comes later ; but it is interesting to observe that what has been written is put before us with this definite object, " That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." And what then is the effect ? A person who really believes that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God,

that person gets life through His name. There is a communication of life by the sovereign grace of God.

When you come to the Epistle of John the Spirit goes a little further. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God ; that ye may *know* that ye *have* eternal life" (1 John v. 13). It is not there the fact that you get life by believing in Him, but that you are to *know* that you have it. It is the present blessed portion of every soul that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ to know they possess, as a present thing, eternal life. I do not say that all such are in the full enjoyment of it. But they are to know it. "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John v. 12). Whether we have entered fully into it is another question altogether. It is of the last importance, however, for the soul to have the sense, "I have got it." There is not a saint on earth to-day that is in the full enjoyment of eternal life, but we shall be when we reach the spot where Christ is. But life is a wonderful thing, and to have it really in the power of the Holy Ghost is to dwell in that blessed sphere of affection and knowledge of the Father, and relationship with the Father, which Christ as the risen Man is now in.

Let us now pass on to the third time the Lord was interviewed in resurrection, as recorded by our evangelist, the remarkable scene of John xxi. In the first we have seen the Church of God instructed. In the second we get the Jew believing and worshipping. The third scene undoubtedly gives us the future blessing of the Gentiles. It has been often said that this is a mysterious chapter. The remark is just, what it contains being an appendix to the Gospel. Under a figure God puts before us another future

sphere, and scene, where Christ will be the spring and source of all blessing. He has not only blessed the Church, and is going to bless the Jew ; but by-and-by all the Gentiles too will trust in Him. Out of the heathen nations He will draw by His sovereign grace, those who are now in darkness. It is a figure of the reign of the Lord when there will be deep, rich, full blessing for those who have now no link with Him whatever. They come in under the figure of the fish. Observe, when they brought the fish to shore, the net did not break. By-and-by when things are administered by Christ there will be no failure. What we have therefore in these three appearances is very simple. The Church, the Jew, and the Gentile, each blessed by Christ. That, beloved friends, I think is the dispensational teaching of these three scenes. Now I pass to the practical way in which the truth here presented applies to our own souls.

"After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias ; and on this wise showed he himself" (ver. 1). The way in which the Spirit of God lays emphasis on this appearing of the Lord is to be noticed. "There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee" (the guileless man of the first chapter of John), and the two sons of Zebedee (James and John), and two other of his disciples" (ver. 2). Now how came these disciples down by the Sea of Tiberias. You know very well that the Sea of Tiberias is where they were born and bred. There it was that Zebedee the father of James and John carried on a large fishing business. When the Lord first called Andrew and Simon, and then called James and John, it says, "They left their father Zebedee in the ship with the

hired servants, and went after him" (Mark i. 20). How came these disciples back again on this historic ground?

You will remember that the Lord had said to the Galilean women, "Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me" (Matt. xxviii. 10). I have no doubt it was this commission, coupled with the message which the angel sent them through the same women, that caused them to be in the place where Jesus met them. They went down to Galilee and waited for Him to appear. Evidently He kept them waiting a little. What position do you and I occupy to-day? "Waiting for the coming of the Lord," you reply. True, and what happens in the meantime? We are being tested, as these seven were. Arrived on the scene of old associations, with the sparkling blue waters of the Sea of Galilee, and the old boats and nets in full view, while waiting for their Lord's appearing, the temptation was presented to them to fill up the time by going a-fishing. That which dominated us in our unconverted days is very apt to re-assert its influence if we are not on our watch.

So was it with the seven disciples here. Had not the Lord called them from fishing? Had He not gathered them round Himself, and said, "I will make you to become fishers of men"? (Mark i. 17). Some of you will say, "It was very natural that they should go fishing." Ah, things that you and I dropped in the first blush of affection for Christ, habits, ways, things we were full of, till Christ met us, are dangers we cannot afford to under-estimate, and, unless we are watchful and careful, depend upon it the day will come when we shall find ourselves confronted by them once more, and they will carry us off.

The case before us is a striking illustration of this principle. "Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a-fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee" (ver. 3). Peter was the ringleader in this expedition, and all the rest follow. It will only take one wilful saint to send a whole company wrong. Let one prominent person go astray, and all the rest will follow. Hence, in a certain sense, the influence we have on each other is a very serious thing. Most certainly it is a solemn thing if it be not right. I do not speak so much of our words as our ways. Because "actions speak louder than words," and a man's spirit is of far more importance than his communications. His general habits will impress others a great deal more than his words, because words are easily forgotten ; but the general habit, the life of the person, is more far-reaching in its effect.

I say this because I feel the importance of it, and with a desire that our hearts might, by grace, be kept near the Lord. The person that is going on with the Lord will affect others for good, and the man who is not walking with the Lord, but is walking afar off, will affect others prejudicially. The "I go a-fishing" of Peter influenced the rest, who thought, if they did not say outright, "It will not be wrong for us if he goes." The more important the person who takes the lead, the wider is the effect of his action. Peter had a remarkable place of prominence among the disciples, hence the weightier was the effect for good or for evil, of his lead, on those around him.

And now we read that, "They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately ; and that night they *caught nothing*" (ver. 3). It was history repeating itself over again. In the days spoken of in the fifth

of Luke, when the Lord preached from Peter's boat, He said: "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all night, and have *taken nothing*" (Luke v. 4, 5). Here it is the same. They take nothing. And, beloved friends, if we are not near the Lord, nothing is really caught. If we get away from Him, if we get on our own line, the line that suits ourselves and our natural inclinations, there will be nothing that is really for the Lord. And then there is disappointment.

"But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples *knew not* that it was Jesus" (ver. 4). A little bit of self-will always blinds the eye. A little bit of taking our own way and of departure from the known will of the Lord will certainly bring spiritual blindness. Why did not they know Him now? There He stood. The fact was this, He had bidden them go and wait for Him; but they took their own way, and went a-fishing instead, turning back to the old paths they had been called out of years before. They inclined to go on the road that presented itself as a temptation, instead of patiently waiting and watching for Him to appear to them, and consequently when He does appear, they do not know Him. There is a pregnant lesson for all saints in this.

"Then Jesus saith unto them, Children (or sirs), have ye any meat?" (ver. 5). Beautiful courtesy and deep interest in them are expressed in this question. I need not say that everything the Lord did and said was absolutely perfect, but the courteous way in which He spoke to them is flung into greater contrast by their reply. "They answered him, No" (ver. 5).

A cold, bare "No." Could anything be coarser? "But," you say, "they did not know Him." That is the sorrowful consideration for us. When we are away from Christ the real state of our hearts comes out, and often by our lips. They do not say "No, Lord," nor even "No, sir," but a bare "No." God records this of purpose, depend upon it. A saint away from Christ, a saint at a distance from Christ, will indulge in a want of courtesy in his very language that will betray his real state. God has therefore recorded this for our learning, and our warning too, beloved friends.

But Jesus, blessed be His name, does not chide them. He says, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." His only thought was their blessing. "They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes" (ver. 6). In a moment by these words a revelation is made to one soul of the seven. "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord." It was John. That man, usually so quick to learn, had till this moment his eye blinded like the rest; because even a very spiritual saint, if he let himself be dragged into ways that are not in keeping with the mind of the Lord, will lose his spirituality, and his keen perception of the truth. John, however, it is who said: "It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him (for he was naked), and did cast himself into the sea" (ver. 7). What led Peter to do that? I have no doubt it was the affection that was in his heart and real desire to get near the Lord. There was undoubtedly in that man a very true and tender attachment to the Person of the blessed Lord.

You may tell me that Peter was impulsive, and self-confident, and therefore he fell. I know it. But who has not fallen? Have you never fallen? Who would dare say so? But there was in Peter a very real and true attachment to the Lord. There had been manifestly something else—self-confidence—but at the bottom of his heart there was deep affection for the Lord. The very fact of his flinging himself into the sea showed how completely, as far as the Lord was concerned, he was restored to Him. I do not believe that this chapter gives us Peter's restoration to the Lord. We saw on a previous occasion that when the two came back from Emmaus to the upper room, they were greeted by the words, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." The Lord evidently had met Simon before that during the day. What took place between the blessed Lord and that dear man at that time, God has, however, flung a veil over, and therefore no one can describe it.

And yet, although I could not describe it, I am pretty certain of what did take place between a Master so perfect in grace, so full of deep, true love, and His erring servant, now a penitent, broken-down man, who had learned by terribly bitter experience where his own self-confidence could carry him. Peter, I am sure, got again in his soul the sense: "I am loved by Him. Spite of all my sin, spite of all the shame I have brought on His name, there is nothing in His heart but love." You know the Lord had warned him and said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but *I have prayed for thee*, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 31, 32). Notice, Satan sifted

him just because he was wheat. Perhaps you have sometimes wondered whether there was any wheat there at all. If there were no wheat there would be no sifting. Satan never sifts mere chaff. It is because there was wheat, and that he was the subject of sovereign and divine grace, that the enemy sought to trip him up. And he will do the same with any of us, if there be not watchfulness and self-judgment.

Peter had said, "Lord, *I am ready* to go with thee, both into prison, and to death" (Luke xxii. 33). All the rest of the disciples really said the same. We are told there what Peter said, as the words fell from his lips; but we read elsewhere, "Likewise also said they all" (Mark xiv. 31). Peter's fall was really at the moment when he boasted of what he would do. What followed was the legitimate outcome of his inward fall. Thereafter he denied the Lord, as you know, and then you remember "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (Luke xxii. 61). What kind of a look was that? Not a look of scorn and reproach I am certain. It was a look that so broke Peter's heart, that "he went out and wept bitterly."

Who can tell all the agony of that man's soul, during the three days, till he met the Lord in resurrection? I am persuaded that what sustained him was his Lord's word, "I have prayed for thee," and the look that Jesus gave him in the high priest's palace. Otherwise he would have done what Judas did, gone and hanged himself. There was only remorse in Judas, so he hanged himself. There was real repentance in Peter, I have no doubt, so true restoration of soul was effected when the Lord met him alone. When He restores He does it Himself. Restoration is this, you get back to Jesus in the deep sense of

absolute forgiveness on His side, and then bask afresh in the warm beams of His unchanging love ; love that has missed you from His side ; love that will not give you up ; and love that, when you come back, makes you feel more fully than ever, how He delights to have you near Him. That is the love of Christ. It never changes and never varies. Well, therefore, may we sing as we often do—

“ O Lord, Thy love's unbounded—
So sweet, so full, so free—
My soul is all transported,
Whene'er I think on Thee !

Yet, Lord, alas ! what weakness
Within myself I find,
No infant's changing pleasure
Is like my wandering mind.

And yet Thy love's unchanging,
And doth recall my heart
To joy in all its brightness,
The peace its beams impart.

Still sweet 'tis to discover,
If clouds have dimmed my sight,
When passed, Eternal Lover,
Towards me, as e'er, Thou'rt bright.”

When John said, “ It is the Lord,” Peter is deeply moved, and seeks to get near to Him. He does not, as elsewhere, wait for the Lord to say, “ Come.” It is not like another time on the same lake, where he said, “ Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water ” (Matt. xiv. 28). His action plainly says, “ I know the Lord would like me to be near Him,” and he gets near Him. The rest of the disciples come dragging the net of fishes. “ As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid

thereon, and bread" (ver. 9). That must have touched Peter's conscience. He knew what had happened beside a fire of coals a few days before; how he had sat down beside the world's fire, got in beside the devil's servants, of course got soiled, and at last denied his Lord. Can I expect the Lord to support me if I am going on with the world's things? Clearly not. I think the old Scotch woman was right when she said regarding Peter, "He had nae business down among the devil's lackies." Of course he got tripped up and came down. Oh, young Christian, you and I will come down if we are not watchful. If we think we can traffic with the world, converse with the worldling, and sit scatheless by the world's fire, you may depend upon it we shall soon find out our mistake and come down also.

But perhaps you say, "I am afraid I shall fall." I will give you comfort. You will not fall to-day because you are afraid you will. It is the day you cease to fear, and the day you think you can walk, that is the day you will fall. Whoever says, "I have no fear of falling," has fallen already. What memories that fire woke up in Peter's heart, but it was the best "fire of coals" he ever saw, for by its warmth the Lord restored him publicly. This is where the Lord gives him a word before all his brethren, which reinstates him as a servant. He had had the Lord's prayer for Him, been melted by His look, and now he is to have the Lord's word. It is the Lord's word that puts that man right before everybody, because he had failed publicly, and now in the presence of the company he has to be restored.

We then read: "Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him.

Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord" (ver. 12). I think they would have liked to ask. At the same time they did not care to do it. "Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead" (ver. 14). This was the third time according to John, but as we have before seen it was the seventh time in all; and if seven denote spiritual perfection, we have its full meaning here in the lovely way in which the blessed Lord deals with His dear servant and perfectly restores him.

"So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" (ver. 15). The moment the Lord seized for this question appears to carry a great lesson for us. Supposing a brother gets astray, and backslides a little, do you know the way to restore him? Would you go and tell him he has slipped away? That will not do him much good. Very likely if you were to say to him, "Brother, come and have a cup of tea with me," and then talk to him about the Lord, that would help him. What had the seven disciples been up till now? Cold and hungry; out all night they had caught nothing, and were disappointed. What does the Lord do? He says, "Come and dine." They get both warmth and food. Do you know a spiritually cold and, consequently, hungry brother? Feed him, warm him up. Give him food, spiritually I mean. The great thing for you and me to do is to warm him. He wants cherishing and nourishing, warmth and food. It is always thus put in Scripture. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church"

(Eph. v. 29). What is the nourishing? Food. What is the cherishing? Warmth.

Beloved friends, I am quite sure if we took this way, the Lord's way, with a saint that has got a little aside, we should do real shepherd-work. You try and get such to your house, give them a nice cup of tea, and then speak about the Lord, and you will be able to help such, minister to their soul-need, recover, and restore them. It is a great thing to be able to restore a person, and the way in which Peter is here restored is very touching. I am fully persuaded that this story, as related by John, is given with deep design of God for our instruction, and the profit of others.

And now let us note the Lord's way of dealing with Peter. You will find there are three questions and three answers, and they each differ. First of all He says, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me *more than these*?" That is, I apprehend, did he love Jesus more than all the rest of the disciples. Peter had once said, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended" (Matt. xxvi. 33). His answer here is, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." But the word Peter uses for love, in each of his replies, is a little different from the Lord's. It is, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I am attached to thee." To this the Lord rejoins, giving him a special commission, "Feed my lambs" (ver. 15).

"He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I am attached to thee. He saith unto him, Shepherd my sheep" (ver. 16). The meaning of this wider commission is surely, "Peter, I trust you to now care for those I love; I

put confidence in you." "He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, art thou attached to me?" He does not use the same word for love the third time that He does the first and second. He adopts Peter's word, "I am attached." He does not say that he was not attached to Him, nor does He chide him. What He does do is this, He puts His finger upon the spring of self-confidence in his soul. "Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Art thou attached to me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I am attached to thee."

Peter, so to speak, now opens the doors of his heart to let his Lord look right in. It would indeed need special perception to see that there was love there. Others might have thought there was no love there at all. How could that man love the Saviour whom he denied thrice? Was he not a hypocrite? No, he was not. I tell you what he was. He was a man, who at the bottom of his heart loved the Lord; but then he got loose in his ways, and careless with his lips, as the fruit of self-confidence, and that was the secret of his tremendous downfall, and three-fold denial of his Master. The Lord's thrice-repeated query touched the springs of his soul absolutely, and grieved and utterly ploughed up, Peter is fain to say, "Lord, thou knowest all things." Thou canst read my heart, Thou knowest what all others might well doubt, and nobody else knows that, "I am attached to thee." What is the Lord's answer? "Feed my sheep" (ver. 17).

Here, in plain language, you have Peter restored in the most beautiful way publicly. Restoration of a brother publicly is, alas! a very rare thing in this day.

How beautifully the Lord put this man right first with Himself, and then with his brethren. There is one thing the Lord greatly desires for each of us, that we should be right with Himself and also with our brethren. So in the presence of them all, He manifestly says, "I trust that man absolutely, for I put into his hands the objects of My tenderest love and solicitude—My lambs and My sheep to feed by his ministry." By the threefold commission here given to His servant the Lord shows how profoundly He can trust him. When Peter trusted himself he failed. When he had the springs of self-confidence broken, that was the moment Christ could trust him. And here in the presence of his brethren he is beautifully and publicly restored to the Lord's confidence.

I have little doubt that when Peter broke down and denied his Lord, there was a good bit of talk among the ten. "How we have been disgraced," very likely fell from their lips, as it falls from ours, if one of the company we are walking with dishonours the Lord's name. Perhaps Peter thought, and they too, that he would never get his head above water again. But now the Lord's rich grace gives him a place of perfect confidence as He puts His sheep into his care. And when you come to the second of the Acts, you will find the Lord giving him a wonderful place. Really the breaking of him was the making of him. If you carefully read his epistles you will find constant allusions, tacit and open, to his fall.

He manifestly desired that Christ's lambs and sheep should go on rightly, and ever have himself as a beacon. In one epistle he says, "*Kept* by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Pet. i. 5). In the next he urges the importance of adding to our

faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. Five times he alludes to these seven moral qualities, and says, "If ye do *these things*, ye shall *never fall*" (2 Pet. i. 5-15). He always had the remembrance of his fall in his soul. The man who has fallen and been put right by God, is just the very one that can help those who may be getting a little bit astray. Men say, "Never trust a horse that has been down and broken his knees." That is well enough for horses, but not for saints. The one who has fallen, and got thoroughly broken and been restored, is just the one the Lord will trust and use. We are very slow to trust such again. I daresay all the ten said, "We shall never be able to trust Brother Simon again." Christ says, "I will trust him with all that I have got on earth." Friends, that is Christ. That is the grace of Christ to a poor feeble saint such as Peter was in himself, and as you and I are in ourselves.

There is something exquisitely beautiful in what now follows these touching ministrations to Peter's soul. He had been afforded, when in the high priest's palace, a grand opportunity of being faithful to the Lord and had missed it. Here the Lord promises him another chance. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not" (ver. 18). I have little doubt that as Peter looked back on his bygone pathway his soul was consumed with agony, for he felt, "I missed the finest chance of being true to the Lord that ever was." And not unlikely he also said, "I

shall never get another." His Lord, as it were, says to him: "Yes, you will, Peter. When that day comes I shall give you grace, Simon, to glorify Me in the very spot of your failure." This is, to me, one of the most touching passages in all Scripture. The Lord assures him he shall have an opportunity where he failed and broke down of being true to Himself. "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God."

Why did Peter say to the enemies of his Lord, "I know not this man of whom ye speak"? (Mark xiv. 71). To save his life. He then felt, "If I own Him, I shall die." And so to save his life he denied Him. 'Now,' says Christ, "you shall get another opportunity of glorifying God." "And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me" (ver. 19). This was His final command.

"Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved, following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter, seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?" (vers. 20, 21). Observe that John is seen here doing what Peter was instructed to do, "Follow me." In the query, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" Peter's old nature asserts itself. The Lord's answer amounts to this: "You mind your own business, Peter." His actual words were: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me" (ver. 22). Similarly it is not a question with you what I shall do, nor is it my business what you shall do. What have I to do? Follow the Lord. The saint who has his eye upon the Lord, and is following the Lord, will be sustained by the Lord.

But the meaning of this scripture is important. "Then went this saying abroad among the brethren,

that this disciple should not die : yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die ; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" The meaning of the Lord's words I understand to be as follows. As to his ministry John goes on to the return of the blessed Lord. This is what you get in his latest writings—the Book of Revelation. He carries you on to that epoch, and thus tarries till Jesus comes again. The Lord give us grace to follow Him more simply and more faithfully than ever till He come.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LORD JESUS' FORTY DAYS.

RESURRECTION SCENES : GALILEE AND BETHANY.

(LUKE xxiv. 44-53 ; ACTS i. 9-11.)

YOU will remember that on a previous occasion I stated that when He rose from the dead the Lord was interviewed on eleven occasions. Seven of these we have already considered — the five times He was seen on the first day, by Mary, the women of Galilee, Peter, those who went to Emmaus, and by the company in the upper room without Thomas. Then a week later He appeared to them when gathered together, Thomas being present, and afterwards to seven of the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.

But there were more than these—for in 1 Corinthians xv. the Holy Ghost records some occasions which you do not get in the Gospels. Among these we read, "After that He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once" (ver. 5). The question arises whether this apparition coincides with that recorded in Matthew xxviii. 16. The Lord had said to the women, "Go tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me" (ver. 10). The message was not

to "the apostles" but to "my brethren," and it suggests itself to my mind that this invitation gathered a good many together. It was not merely that the *apostles* were to go and see Him there, but the *brethren*. Affection for Christ will always carry the true heart to the spot where He is, and He cares for nothing else. We set much store by intelligence, because it makes something of us. We are told not to be "unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is," but depend upon it that it is affection He values.

Concerning the apostles we read, "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where *Jesus had appointed them*" (ver. 16). The eleven evidently obeyed His word, but the five hundred, if they saw Him at this moment, reaped the reward of affection. "And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted" (ver. 17). The doubt mentioned here may be the reason for this appearing being omitted in 1 Corinthians xv., as are all other occasions concerning which any unbelief as to the truth of the apparition was evidenced at the moment of its narration. On the other hand, the fact just stated as to the studied elimination by Paul of *all* occasions where doubt was flung on the truth of the Lord having been seen, lends weight to the thought that we must not identify the appearing to the "eleven" and the "five hundred," since the latter are cited as irrefragable testimonies, while the former was not mentioned in 1 Corinthians xv. The fact that some then doubted might invalidate their witness. Anyway they are not cited. I should therefore incline to think that the appearing to the five hundred was on a separate occasion, and possibly the ninth.

"After that he was seen of James" (1 Cor. xv. 7), is

the brief and only account we have of this appearing. It would seem to be the tenth. Over what took place on these two appearances God has flung a veil. The five hundred saw the Lord, and so many witnesses could not be mistaken; their testimony was thus invaluable from Paul's point of view. The position which James held afterwards in the Church has led to the thought that he may have at this moment received instructions from the Lord which, later, were of value to His saints.

What the Lord said to the eleven is of great interest, and full of comfort to us. While addressed to them, His words are of immense value to us, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (ver. 18). If we got hold of this immense truth, we should not be so poverty-stricken spiritually as we often are. This sad condition obtains oftentimes just because we have not realised that He has all power, and it is at the disposal of faith and affection. The commission to teach and baptize all nations doubtless had special reference to the apostles, but His closing words here, "And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (ver. 20), have carried with them deepest comfort and support to all His own from that day to this. Well indeed may we rest upon them in simple faith. The hope of our hearts is to be *with Him*. Meantime what sustains these hearts? He says, "I am *with you*." The Lord is coming back to take us to be where He is, but till then He is with us. Matthew's Gospel closes by showing us the Lord in the midst of His people, saying, "I am with you alway," *i.e.*, He *remains* here.

Now turn to Mark, and see the way in which that

Gospel closes. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (xvi. 15). Notice how His heart desired that what His own disciples enjoyed should be enjoyed by others. I know very well that some may say, Was not this apostolic? Yes, primarily, but He was talking to His people, and I believe the spirit of the words is to be abiding. Again, some one may say, This is not the day in which God is working among the heathen. See how Mark opens, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (i. 1). Where and when would you expect these glad tidings to be promulgated? Surely everywhere and at all times, and in connection with this look at chapter xiii. There is a very striking word there. The Lord is telling His disciples what sorrow is coming to Israel, and then adds, "And *the gospel* must first be published among all nations" (ver. 10). But probably you will say, Does not that mean the gospel of the kingdom? If you will go back to Matthew xxiv., you will read these words, "And *this gospel of the kingdom* shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (ver. 14). Now Matthew xxiv. is not Mark xiii. While Matthew xxiv. tells us that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached as a witness to all nations before Messiah again comes, what we have in Mark's Gospel is this, there is never to be a moment during His absence in which His disciples are not to be busy carrying forth the gospel. The thought of the Lord recorded by Mark appears to me to be quite different from that recorded by Matthew. The latter is a widespread testimony, given largely by the Jew, I gather from Scripture, that will go out, by-and-by,

to every nation as a witness that He is just about to return, but, as presented in Mark's Gospel, it is what He desires, and what the Spirit of God has led to in this our day. Devoted men and women have gone and are going out, with their lives in their hands, to carry the glad tidings of His grace to those who have never heard them.

Servants of Christ are to-day telling needy, weary souls nearly *everywhere* of the Son of God, and from my heart I say, "Lord, sustain, cheer, help, and bless them." I am deeply thankful for any who, at great personal risk, and with real devotedness of heart to the Lord, have gone to tell weary souls in heathen darkness of the glory of the Person and the value of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is easy for others less devoted to stay at home and criticise their work. The day of the Lord will show which path He esteems the better. The commission of Mark xvi. is very plain: "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature*. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Coupled with believing is the honest confession of His name, and that takes the character of baptism—putting on the name of the Lord in that way. Doubtless this commission was primarily apostolic, but who would dare say it ceased at their death.

The Gospel of Mark closes as you would expect it to. The toil of the true servant is rewarded. "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" (ver. 19). Now look at the difference—He is not seen remaining here upon earth, as in Matthew, He is at the right hand of God—all power is in His hands, and He gives us the grace and cheer of His

presence as we pass along here. All power is in the hands of the Anointed Man at God's right hand, upon whom our eyes should be fixed steadfastly. "And they went forth and preached *everywhere*, the Lord working with them." Where do you and I preach? There is a great lesson in this, and we may take great encouragement. If the Lord bids you go forth with His Word, and you are simple in following His guidance and leading, you will find the Lord working with you as He did with them then. Christ reigning at the right hand of God and *working* with His own on earth is the close of Mark's Gospel. Matthew's Gospel closes with Christ *remaining* on earth, Mark's with His *reigning* in heaven, Luke's with His *retiring* from earth, and John's with His *returning* to earth.

Now turn to Luke xxiv. One charm of this chapter is that it gives us the last occasion on which the blessed Lord was with His people here. If we had only this Gospel, as I have before said, we should think the contents of this chapter happened on one day. Morally it *is* one day; it is the resurrection day, and has one particular character. One point to notice is the place the Scriptures have in it. "Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the scriptures" is recorded that day (ver. 45). He tells the disciples that "all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (ver. 44). I should like to press on you the importance of the Scriptures—of the Old Testament Scriptures. You can have no real value for God's things if you do not tenaciously hold all His Word. I have heard this part of God's Word

spoken of very lightly. See the way the Lord Jesus speaks of and puts the stamp of His authority upon the whole of the Scriptures. When He walked with the two to Emmaus, we have already seen how "he expounded unto them in *all the scriptures* the things concerning himself" (ver. 27). What a wonderful two hours' walk that must have been. What must it have been to hear Him open up the Scriptures about Himself—what an unfolding of type, figure, and shadow—what a never-to-be-forgotten moment.

Now observe, why, when together with His own, He opens the Scriptures, and also opens their understanding. They had not yet received the Holy Ghost, but we have, so the Lord expects a Christian to have his understanding opened. Why oftentimes do we not understand? There has something come in which hinders our souls being taught of Christ. But they were to be sweetly taught of the Lord, and the whole company, apostles and others, as we have seen, get a cheering commission, as He says to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name *among all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem."

Observe that the commission was to preach to "all nations," as recorded by Matthew and Luke, and to "all the world" as given in Mark. That is wide enough. It is the individual servant who is responsible to carry out the commission. He does not exactly say "Go" to the Church, because the Church does not teach or preach—the Church is taught, and preached to. It is to the individual, because ministry is the exercise of the gift given to the individual

by Christ. He communicates that gift, and He alone should direct its use. He holds the stars in His right hand, in Revelation ii. 1, for they belong to Him, and Him only, hence the possessor of any gift is responsible only to the Lord for its exercise.

Further, notice that repentance and remission of sins were to be proclaimed, "beginning at Jerusalem." Jerusalem was the worst spot—the place where He was murdered. Observe also to whom He says, "And ye are witnesses of these things." It was not only the eleven who were there when the Lord came into their midst, hence it was not an apostolic company. It is good to remember this, and Scripture is very clear as to it. "And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and *them that were with them*" (ver. 33). The apostles were there, but the brethren were there, and the sisters also I judge. The two from Emmaus joined them, and then to the assembled company the Lord comes and communicates His mind, saying finally, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (ver. 49). They had to wait for the coming of the Holy Ghost. We have not to wait now, for from the Anointed Man in glory the Holy Ghost has come, and with Him has come power for all that we are called upon to be and to do as children of God, and servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without doubt the Holy Ghost is often grieved in us by the allowance of the flesh, and the outflow of the "rivers of living water" of which Christ spoke (John vii. 38), is checked or hindered.

What is the reason of this? I read lately of a

town that was supplied with lovely water from a large lake in a mountain, but one day the water stopped. Men went to look if the lake were dry, but found that it was all right, the source was unchanged. Then an anonymous letter was received directing attention to a plug having been put in the supply pipe. That was keeping back the water, and when it was removed the water flowed on as before. Don't you think sometimes a plug gets into our supply pipe? Ask your own heart what is the plug that has got into your soul's history, and is hindering you from being a real living Christian carrying Christ everywhere, and being a source of blessing to everybody. I desire to ask myself a similar question. Let us take out the plug. My hand cannot take your plug out; we have to get before the Lord individually that He might remove whatever is hindering the inflow of the living water. "Rivers of living water" are to flow through us to refresh and bless others. How little conception we have of the way the Lord would use us, as the channels of communication between Himself and needy souls! It is not a question so much of gift as of spiritual state. Too much is often made of a man with a gift, and saints are putting too much on the shoulders of those possessing gifts. It really is a question of individual devotedness to Christ, and of walking with an ungrieved Spirit. If that be our state, the Lord can use us, for grace is more important than gift.

The disciples were to wait till they were endued with power. We have not now to do so, for the Holy Ghost has come and dwells in every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is all power, hence to speak now of a weak Christian is an anomaly. A powerless

saint is a being that is not contemplated in Scripture. If you and I are filled with the power of the Holy Ghost, we shall not speak of weakness, we shall not speak of ourselves at all. We shall be filled with Christ, and out of us will flow the "living water," *i.e.*, Christ will come out in our life and testimony, and others will thereby be affected and blessed.

Having given His disciples their commission and promised them the Spirit, Jesus led them out as far as Bethany. Why Bethany? Apparently that was a spot He loved. It was there that He had been received and cared for (Luke x. 38). It was there that Mary sat at His feet and heard His word, and there, when He raised Lazarus, it was the place where His glory was demonstrated as Son of God (John xi. 4-40). It was there they made Him a feast, and Mary anointed His feet (John xii. 1-3). It was from thence He went to Jerusalem to receive the kingdom and the crown, if His people would give it Him, but they would not, and He went back to Bethany (Mark xi. 1-11). It was the spot where He was really appreciated, and where there were hearts that truly loved Him, and He cared for their affection.

Do you think He has changed since then? Do you think He is in anywise different? Where He sits at God's right hand, do you think He is indifferent to the beating of your heart and mine? I trow not. In Acts i. the angel speaks of Him as "this same Jesus." Where was He yesterday? At Bethany. Where is He to-day? At the Father's right hand. Where will He be to-morrow? Back to Bethany (see Acts i. 11; Zech. xiv. 4). What will He then again find? Hearts that appreciate Him.

He came to earth by Bethlehem to fulfil Scripture. He went from it to heaven by Bethany, where He had been prized and loved, and where they had made much of Him.

This is the last time He had His own together round Him upon earth, and then it was that "he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." He goes up with His hands uplifted in blessing—in a priestly character. In Mark He goes up as a faithful Servant whom God honours ; but in Luke, it seems to me, He goes up in a priestly character, His hands uplifted in blessing. Have they ever been let down? Surely not. We read that in the battle between Israel and Amalek: "It came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek" (Exod. xvii. 11-13). No Aaron and Hur are needed to hold up the hands of the blessed One of whom I speak. His hands have never got heavy. He has been blessing ever since—carrying on a ministry of love that makes the heart dance with joy.

Our hands hang down sometimes; hence we are told, "Lift up the hands which hang down" (Heb. xii. 12). Why do our hands hang down? Because our eyes are not fixed simply on Him. The source of maintained power is Christ. Well said another, "THE SECRET OF PEACE WITHIN, AND POWER WITHOUT,

IS TO BE ALWAYS AND ONLY OCCUPIED WITH CHRIST." These words I would give you as a motto for life.

Luke's Gospel closes with a worship meeting, fit ending to the wondrous "forty days" we have been considering. "They worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God" (vers. 52, 53). This is as it should be. Luke's is emphatically a Gospel of joy; there is a great deal about it all through. It begins, continues, and closes with joy (see i. 14, 44, ii. 10, x. 17, xv. 7, 10, 23, xxiv. 41, 52). You show me a joyless Christian, and I will certainly show you a weak one. Possibly you will say, you do not know my circumstances. True, but the blessed One who has gone on high knows all about your circumstances and mine too, and the Spirit of God has said, "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. viii. 10). We need to dip our feet in oil, like Asher, we should then be acceptable to our brethren, and should also prove, "And as thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deut. xxxiii. 24, 25). Joy and strength go together always. We should cultivate the spirit of the scene before us. The Lord was blessing His own, and they are seen one moment praising Him, and then going back to their homes full of joy. Was not that grateful to the Lord? How it should stir up our souls to seek to be like them in our walk and ways down here.

We hear a little more of this touching incident in the Acts of the Apostles. There we read: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly

toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel ; which also said, This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts i. 9-11). Notice here that they *looked* STEDFASTLY ; in chapter ii. 42 they *continued* STEDFASTLY ; and in chapter vii. 55 Stephen *looked* up STEDFASTLY into heaven. It is a great thing to be stedfast ; we are often vacillating, and hence there is no power. But they hear blessed news as they stedfastly look up. This same Jesus was to come back in power in the clouds of heaven. The angels say, You have seen Him go up, but you will see Him come back here. He is going to establish all the thoughts and purposes of God in relation to earth.

But before that takes place there is something for you and me, dear fellow-believer. He is coming to take us to the spot where He is Himself. I do not think that we should view the hope of the Church, *i.e.*, the coming of the Lord for us, as given in 1 Thessalonians iv. 15-17, as that which will merely take us out of the scene of difficulty. We should desire to live here for the Lord. It is a blessed thing to go on, and it is a serious thing to be cut off in the midst of your days.

Dear friends, are you weary of the road? You want and you may get the power and grace of heaven to uphold and strengthen you in the spot where you are. Paul could say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13). Christ was his competency in every trial. He had a desire to depart and be with Christ, but knew that it was better for them that he should remain, and help others, and so remained (Phil. i. 23, 24).

But the blessed Lord is coming for us, and in the meantime He wants our hearts to be kept in the enjoyment of His love, and, in true affection for Himself, waiting for His coming back into the world, out of which He has been cast, but where yet He will get His rights, and His name be honoured from pole to pole, and His name be the theme of every tongue. But, before that day, He is coming to take His Church to be with Himself in the spot where love reigns. It will be a very blessed moment when that occurs.

Thus we terminate our review of these striking periods of time. The last two "forty days" of Scripture exceed all the others in their varied lessons for our souls. How could it be otherwise, since they unfold His ways, who is the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending"?

If the earlier of the series show the necessary judgment of God on the sin of the first man, who lost all by doing his own will, how do the later describe the victory, and show the well-earned glories of the last Adam, who retrieved all by His obedience in carrying out God's will. All God's counsels and purposes from eternity centre in Him, who was the Man of His reserve. What we have been considering in His life, death, and resurrection, reveals the moral glory and personal worth of Jesus in a way that might well capture our hearts, bind them to Him, and make Him the object of our deepest devotion.

Let us not then, for one single moment, forget that now is the only opportunity we shall have of showing our affection for Him. Life will soon be

over for each of us. We have but one life, let us live it for Jesus. Well said the apostle Paul, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). That is a sound, just judgment, and the one who has really tasted the Lord's grace will seek to let it be the ruling maxim of life. We live in a day when deep-toned devotedness to Christ is urgently called for.

May it be yours and mine to heed His call, "Follow thou me," and surrender all that we have and are to Him and His service. Soon we shall hear His blessed voice calling us on high, to see and ever be with Himself.

How blessed will it then be if we should hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant (Matt. xxv. 23).

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